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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
WILLIAM PRESTON, ESQ.
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

——— Fuge, quo discedere gestis:
Non erit emissio reditus tibi. Quid miser egi?
Quid volui? dices, ubi quis te læserit:——

HORACE.



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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

IT may be necessary to apologize for the delay which has retarded the appearance of my Poems. I can assure the Public, the fault was not mine, but proceeded entirely from the tediousness of Artists, whom I employed in the little embellishments of my Publication.

It may also be proper to mention how it happens that a Dramatic Poem, called Democratic Rage, lately published by me, is not included in this Collection.—Most part, if not the whole, of the letter press of these two volumes, was actually worked off, before that horrid event took place, on which the Poem called Democratic Rage was founded. But had the Poem in question been written in time to find a place in my Collection, I should not have inserted it, as I did not think it sufficiently correct. Most of the preceding pieces have been hastily written, but they have not been

hastily published ; I have kept them by me many years ; submitted them to the revision and censure of my friends ; and been ever more ready to adopt the corrections and emendations of the candid and judicious, than they were to propose them. Democratic Rage was written and published, on the spur of the occasion, rather as a political pamphlet, than as a poetical production ; I was conscious of its many faults and imperfections ; I did not think it worth attention as a mere drama ; but flattered myself that it might have some merit and utility, in the humbler character of a pamphlet ; and was induced to print it, by that motive alone : the public, however, has been pleased to stamp a value on my production, by a reception favourable beyond my most sanguine wishes ; and I should now, think it presumptuous to curtail, enlarge, or alter, in any shape, what has pleased the reader in its present form.

FOR the information of those, who may wish that the piece in question had been inserted in these volumes ; I must beg leave to observe, that a person must be void of feeling, who can behold without emotion the busy scene of the present hour : for me, the great and stupendous events, the sudden and unexpected vicissitudes of fortune, and

the violent and inexplicable revolutions of opinion, that perpetually pass before our eyes, in the gloom of the present politics, like the monstrous pictures of a magic lantern, possess my mind, with such strong impressions, that my best resolutions are overpowered, and I feel myself irresistibly hurried into the snares of versification. When I set about preparing this Collection for the press, it was my firm determination, that it should contain, with the first, the last follies of my pen. I find, that poets are as ill able to maintain their determinations, as lovers ; and should I be emboldened to it, by the reception of these two volumes, I am apt to think, that I may trespass on the notice of the Public, by a third ; in which, my readers may be assured, that Democratic Rage will not be forgotten.

WILLIAM PRESTON.

C O N T E N T S

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME.

THOUGHTS on Lyric Poetry	Page
Myrrha, an Irregular Ode - - - - -	17
Verses written in the Dargle - - - - -	28
Ode to Sincerity - - - - -	34
Ode to the Moon - - - - -	45
Health, an Irregular Ode - - - - -	60
Speech of an Old Savage to his Son - - - - -	74
Offa and Ethelbert, a Tragedy - - - - -	81
Critique on Offa and Ethelbert - - - - -	178
Messene Freed, a Tragedy - - - - -	189
Critique on Messene Freed - - - - -	288
Rosmunda, a Tragedy - - - - -	299
Epilogue to this Collection, in two Epistles - - - - -	379

E R R A T A.

Page 14, line 11, adopts read adapts.

16, — 12, contribute *read* contributes.

36, — 21, and taught *read* awak'd.

98, — 5, awake *read* wake.

106, — 16, where *read* were.

118, — 19, children's *read* childrens'.

124, — 2, in *read* on.

254, — 16, fillet's *read* fillets.

255, — 2, where *read* were.

384, — 15, *dele comma after violets.*

386, *line last but two, for comma, full stop.*

O D E S.

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THOUGHTS

ON

LYRIC POETRY.

IT is with some diffidence that I venture to express my dissent from the opinion of a writer, whose success as a poet must add weight and influence to his sentiments as a critic, I mean Mr. Mason; but false criticisms falling from men of high character have a most pernicious effect, particularly with readers who seldom venture to think for themselves. Assertions may be hazarded rashly on the spur of the occasion, even by the most judicious; and when we meet with any thing paradoxical, we should not be deterred from examining it, by the terrors of a great name, lest we should mistake unfounded assumptions, for good arguments, and chimerical speculations, for first principles.

In the following paper I propose to offer some remarks, on an opinion of Mr. Mason's respecting lyric poetry, which he has published in a note on Mr. Gray's seventh ode, in his edition of that author's works.

The note to which I allude runs thus:—"This ode, to which in the title I have given the epithet of irregular, is the only one of the kind which Mr. Gray ever wrote, and its being written occasionally and intended for music is a sufficient apology for the defect. Exclusive of this, for a defect it certainly is, it appears to me, in point of lyrical arrangement and expression, to be equal to most of his other odes. It is remarkable that amongst the many irregular odes which have been written in our language, Dryden's and Pope's on St. Cecilia's day are the only ones that may properly be said to have lived. The reason is, as I have hinted, that this mode of composition is so extremely easy, that it gives the reins to every kind of poetical licentiousness; whereas the regular succession of strophe, antistrophe, and epode, put so strong a curb on the wayward imagination, that when she has once paced in it, she seldom chooses to submit to it a second time; 'tis therefore greatly to be wished, that in order to stifle in their birth a quantity of compositions which are at the same time wild and jejune, regular odes, and those only, should be esteemed legitimate amongst us."

I am not surprized that such a remark should fall from one who has written so many regular odes; the most candid poet may feel his judgment in some degree warped by his poetical studies; we find Dryden, at one time, a champion for rhyming tragedies, at another recommending alternate rhymes, as the most eligible heroic measure; from the same cause, and perhaps with as much justice in both instances, as Mr. Mason sticks for the regular ode. I must own I was surprized to find the odes of Pope and Dryden on St. Cecilia's day classed together, as if the two productions were of equal merit; indeed, I was surprized to hear Pope's ode mentioned, as a poem which may still be said to live.

I am somewhat at a loss to determine whether Mr. Mason, in the note in question, means by the term regular ode a poem which exhibits the regular succession of strophe, antistrophe and epode, or that merely which is confined to an uniform and regularly repeated stanza. If we are to apply this denomination to poems of the first class only, the number of odes is but small, comparatively speaking, and of that number many are faint and weak, and many sleep; certainly, such of them as have stood their ground are far inferior in number and merit

to their irregular brethren. If we are to understand the term regular ode in the latter and more extensive sense, then it follows, that a trifling ballad or song will be a regular ode, and pass for sterling, because of the uniform returning stanza, while no regularity of plan, no lyrical arrangement, or propriety of sentiment, will exempt from the charge of irregularity an ode, which unluckily admits a variety of stanza.

The mere regular return of an uniform stanza, if that stanza does not afford a copious interchange of melodious sounds, is not a work of much difficulty in the execution, or merit in the perusal; neither can it be said to impose any very strong, at least it does not impose any very useful curb, on the wayward imagination; nor will it, I presume, be found a very effectual means of excluding compositions wild and jejune: In truth, I am inclined to doubt whether this desirable end can be obtained by the adoption of strophe, antistrophe and epode. It would be invidious to quote particular instances, but any one who will take the trouble of turning over some of our miscellaneous collections, and other books of modern poetry, will find things called odes, which are at once wild and jejune, though trimmed and laced up in the straight waistcoat of strophe, antistrophe and epode, according to all the severities of the Greek masters.

Mr. Mason insists on the small number of irregular odes, which, as he says, deserve to be ranked with the living, as an argument against this species of composition. He confines the catalogue to narrow limits, Dryden's and Pope's odes on St. Cecilia's day. Suppose this for a moment to be just, is not Dryden's ode of sufficient excellence and dignity, to give a new form of composition, and become the archetype, and as I may say, the founder of a distinct poetical family? Is not the complaint of Cowley to all intents and purposes lyrical? Do his pindaric odes, which are professedly irregular, deserve to be involved in the indiscriminate doom of death? Even the severe Hurd, in his castrations of Cowley, has reprieved and admitted some of them into his collection. I know not to what class we shall refer Milton's *Lycidas*; to me it seems to belong to the genus of irregular odes. Mr. William Browne, an excellent poet of the last century, has left a beautiful irregular ode, written on a like affecting occasion with the *Lycidas*, and not much inferior to it in poetical merit: and here, by the by, I must mention, though somewhat out of place, that there is a very early specimen, indeed, of the irregular ode in the english language, I mean a

poem on the death of Henry the first, which bears marks of the highest antiquity, and may be found in a collection, called the muse's library. Perhaps Dryden's secular ode does not deserve to be mentioned on this occasion, though surely it ranks higher than Pope's ode on St. Cecilia's day. But it would be unpardonable to omit the admirable, and I must add, much injured Collins, who has left several beautiful specimens of the irregular lyric, which do not deserve to be numbered with the dead, nay, which cannot die while any regard for harmonious versification and classical composition subsists among us.

If the irregular ode is a species of composition so extremely easy, is it not wonderful that it has not been more generally adopted? If it is such a temptation to rash meddlers in poetry, one might be led to suppose that the english language must be overflowed with irregular odes; but we find, on the contrary, that this mode of composition is far from being frequent among us. I believe there are in english more regular than there are irregular odes. The reason of this may be easily explained: the severe form of the ancient regular lyric has in it something elaborate, uncommon, and fit to impose on the minds of vulgar readers, who are apt to admire what they do not understand, and enables a heavy mediocrity of talents, by the use of a little pains and study, not only to impose on the world, and acquire at least a transient popularity, but even to impose on the writer himself. If the irregular ode has introduced compositions wild and jejune, the pedantry of the anglo-grecian lyric has contributed to the propagation of verses that are tame and insipid, made up of epithets and unmeaning verbiage, and disguised with foreign idioms.

The introduction of strophe, antistrophe and epode into english poetry is not only unnecessary, but unaccountable. There is not a single instance of it in Malherbe, that great master of french lyric poetry, who was a very correct and classical writer. Ben Johnson, a servile imitator of the ancients, was, I believe, the first who introduced it in english, under the denomination of turn, return, and counterturn. Among the greeks themselves the use of the strophe, antistrophe and epode was not adopted universally and indiscriminately in every species of the ode. If we are to believe the ancient grammarians, the models of the greek lyric, in which this division is adopted, were all composed to be sung by a chorus, and accompanied with dancing; and the strophe, antistrophe and epode, as the etymology of their

names seems to import, had a reference to the song and dance. The first stanza, called strophe, they sung, dancing at the same time; the second, called the antistrophe, was sung while the dance was inverted; the epode they sung standing still*. In corroboration of this opinion, we find that the odes which pursue this form were either in honour of the victors in some of the greek games, and intended to be sung by a chorus at the entertainments given by the conquerors, to whom they were inscribed, or by their friends, on account of their victories, or at the solemn sacrifices made to the gods on those occasions, as the odes of Pindar which have reached our time; or else make part of some dramatic poem, and were intended to be performed on the stage by a chorus, in like manner, and accompanied with dancing. Thus we see in what odes, and why, this complicated regularity, this threefold correspondence of uniform and regularly repeated stanzas, was adopted. We find it was not employed in the greek poetry intended for other purposes, and not composed with a view to music. Horace, who studied the greeks with great care, admired them exceedingly, and was a very correct writer, has not thought proper to introduce the strophe, antistrophe and epode into latin poetry; and why? Doubtless because he well knew that they were appropriated to poetry intended to be set to music, and performed by a chorus. Is it not then a pedantic and idle affectation to adopt in english poetry a regulation which was rejected by the latins, and not universally employed even by the greeks themselves, but only when

* This union of poetry, music and dancing, is inexplicable enough to us, whose manners are so different from those of the ancients; however, there cannot be any doubt of the fact; to prove it, I need only adduce part of a chorus in the Hercules furens of Euripides, which manifestly alludes to it:

Ὅου παύσομαι ἴδ' ἡ χεῖρας
 μουσῶν σπυγαλαμειγνύσ'
 ἡδίστην συζυγίαν
 εἰ ζῶν μετ' εὐμυσίας
 αἰεὶ δ' ἐν στεφάνοισιν ἔϊναι
 * * *
 παρὰ γὰρ βρόμιον ὀνοεῖσθαι
 παρὰ γὰρ χεῖλ' ἐπὶ λαόνῳ
 μελὴ πᾶν καὶ λιθὺν αὐτόν

ὅπου καταπαύσεται
 μουσᾶς αἰ μ' ἀχρὲς ὄσων.

Antistrophe.

Παιῖδ' αὖ μετ' Ὀδυσσεὺς
 ὕμνους ἀμφὶ πολέας
 καὶ ὅς τ' ἐν παιδὶ γόνον
 ἐλίσσουσας καλλιχέρον.

the subject made it necessary that the ode should be set to music, and performed with an accompaniment of dancing? It seems to me that it would be more rational to suppose that all our english odes were to be set to music, and to divide them into recitative, air and chorus.

Mr. Mason seems to rely on another principle as certain and incontrovertible, in which, notwithstanding, I cannot readily bring myself to acquiesce: that by increasing the difficulty of writing poetry, we promote its excellence; and, in particular, that by rendering a subordinate and merely mechanical part of poetry, for instance, the measure, more operose and inconvenient to the composer, we shall succeed in checking the growth of bad poetry; I say this, supposing for the present, but by no means admitting, the irregular ode to be, as Mr. Mason supposes, a species of composition of the utmost facility. On this principle of exalting the beauties of poetry, by encreasing its difficulties, which, by the by, seems to be just such an experiment as if we should attempt to add grace and agility to a dancer by encumbering his legs with fetters, or speed a courser by loading him with a heavy burthen; on this principle where shall we stop? What bounds of difficulty and consequent perfection shall we appoint? If, in order to deter rash meddlers, the composition of an ode is to be rendered more difficult, by wantonly dividing it into strophe, antistrophe and epode, why rest there? Let the sanctuary of good writing be still more effectually secured from prophane intruders, by ordaining that lyric poems should be always written in the shape of a flute, a pair of wings, an egg, an axe, or an altar? Some greek writers have attempted all these fantastic forms of composition; but is the merit of the poems of this kind, which have reached us, in any degree proportioned to the difficulty? Has the difficulty of composing rondeaus, acrostics and charades delivered the french language from a mob of writers at once wild and jejune? To pursue this reasoning a little farther: it is acknowledged on all hands that french versification is subject to a very severe and tyrannical code of rules; it is much more difficult to write poetry in that language, than it is in the latin, greek, italian or english. Now, have meaner spirits been deterred by this difficulty? Is the number of minor poets less in the french than in other languages? Or is the comparative excellence of the french poetry great, in proportion to the discouragement which are thrown in the way of their writers, by the severe laws of versification? The french writers complain of this tyrannical code as an heavy grievance, and so intolerable is the

burthen, that some of their best poets, particularly Corneille, the first of french bards, violate the laws of versification without scruple. Indeed I had always been taught to hold an opinion directly contrary to this position, and to believe, that in proportion as the execution of the mechanical part in the fine arts is easy, there is a greater prospect of attaining to general excellence; and to common understandings this opinion would seem to be well-founded. The pains, study and time which will be exhausted in adjusting the mere mechanical part, when it is of a more difficult form, may, when that difficulty is removed, be employed on a nobler care, that of considering the plan, removing defects, and heightening the beauties, by correcting, retouching and polishing the whole. I have often heard blank verse preferred to rhyme, on this very ground, that it imposed less troublesome restraints on the poet; and I had observed that in those languages which are called, by way of distinction, poetical, as the italian, the mechanical of poetry is most easy, which could not be the case if the difficulty of composition were a pledge and guarantee for its excellence. I suppose it is on this principle of attaining excellence, by inducing difficulty, that Mr. Hayley has produced his comedies in rhyme; and on the same system it would follow, that tragedies also ought to be written in rhyme, as being a more difficult mode of versification; in short, if by enhancing the difficulty of poetical composition you should lessen the number of bad poets, will you not lessen the number of good ones? There is greater merit, certainly, in the attainment of excellence in something very difficult; but in such a case the number of excellent productions will be small in proportion.

The more I consider the introduction of strophe, antistrophe and epode into the english language, the more am I struck with the impropriety of it; on what principle of reason are we required to adopt the regulations of composition, which prevailed in a dead language, of a structure wholly different from our own, and with the true pronunciation of which we are not fully acquainted? It seems to be very unjust, to impose on english poets the same strictness, with regard to the stanza, and structure of the ode, which prevails in Pindar, and the chorus of the greek tragedy. The genius of their language does not furnish the english writers with the same instruments and means of facilitating their compliance with the law. I, Both the greek and latin languages have a great advantage in the bold and frequent inversions of words, which they not only permit, but require; this

must have assisted the poet amazingly in attaining an harmonious arrangement of words, and a rich and easy versification. 2, The greek language admitted a variety of dialects, which the poet might intermix, as suited his convenience; this gave a greater choice and variety of synonymous sounds, and greatly facilitated the task of composition. 3, The latin poet found the same convenience in poetical licence; but the greek language allowed it in a still higher degree, more freely indeed than any language I know, except the italian. Now this privilege is very sparingly, if at all, indulged to an english writer, whose task in versifying is therefore so much the more difficult. 4, Both the greek and latin lyric poets took the liberty of ending the line in the middle of a word, if the versification happened to require it, as you may see in every page of Horace and Pindar; indeed, there are in Virgil instances of such a license, even in heroic verse. A liberty of this sort would not be endured in english; I question whether even the charms of the strophe, antistrophe and epode could reconcile it to those who want the true antiquated classic ear. 5, The ancients went still greater lengths; there are instances of a stanza or strophe ending in the middle of a word, and the remainder carried over to the next stanza; as for example, in the second antistrophe of the third olympic of Pindar, which ends in the middle of a word, and the second epode, which begins with the remaining syllable:

δὴ τὸν ἐς γαίαν πορεύειν θυμὸν ὀρέσσεται
ἐπὶ δὲ β
ἢ ἱερὸν νῦν. εὖ δ' αὖτε, &c.

Having hazarded these cursory remarks on the critical opinions contained in the note above-mentioned, permit me to add a few arguments in favour of the irregular ode. In the first place, it has the sanction of classic authority to recommend it; the ancients, our great, and, indeed, inimitable masters in poetry, they, who imposed every necessary curb on the wayward imagination, and were not often guilty of wild or jejune writing, the illustrious ancients loved and practised this species of composition. The most celebrated and sublime of Pindar's works were irregular odes, I mean his dithyrambics; on these, though they have unfortunately perished in the wreck of time, his reputation as a poet was most essentially founded. We have the suffrage of as good

a critic as he was a poet,* both as to their merit and their bold irregularity:

Seu per audaces nova dithyrambos
Verba devolvit, numerisque fertur
Lege solutis.

HORACE.

The ancient grammarians and critics recognize the polymetra and pammetra of the ancients, in which verses of all different measures were employed, without any uniform order or connection. Claudian, Terentianus Maurus, and Martianus Capellus, have all written lyric poems, each of which takes in a variety of different stanzas; that of Claudian was written on the marriage of the emperor Honorius. If we are to believe an ingenious french critic*, the secular ode of Horace was an irregular one, or to speak more correctly, a multiform lyric, embracing a free variety of different stanzas. Whether the conjecture of Mr. Sanadon, as to the junction of the several parts which he brings together, be well or ill founded, it serves to support my argument, as it shews that in the opinion of a learned man and a good critic the irregular ode was by no means alien from the correct genius of classic poetry.

We may also allege the example of the italian lyric poets in favour of the irregular ode; there are a great number of beautiful compositions of that species in their language, particularly by Chiabrera and Metastasio, a writer to whom the epithets of wild and jejune can hardly be applied with any propriety. Fontaine, among the french, may be considered as a great master in the irregular lyric. Among us, the correct and laborious Ben Johnson, as he was the first importer of the strophe, antistrophe and epode, has given us also the first english precedent of an irregular ode, if I mistake not, in the poem on the burning of his works.

But why resort to precedent for a justification of the irregular ode? I may intrench myself in stronger ground, the internal evidence of its merit, and the obvious advantages which result from this species of

* Sanadon.

composition. First, it leaves the poet at liberty to follow the order and connexion of his ideas, and to express them in the most apt and forcible manner. He is not obliged to sacrifice strength and energy to stanza, to become a literary Procrustes, and torture out some thoughts through a nerveless extent of prolix tenuity, while others are proportionably cut and cramped, to make them fit the stanza. He is not stooped short, in the very heat and acmé, of composition, as it were by a great gulf, or obliged to introduce alien or unnecessary ideas, in order to square his matter with his measure, and preserve the preconceived division of his poem into partitions of a certain unvarying length. The stanza is commensurate to the sense, and exhibits nothing redundant, nothing incoherent or disjointed; the thought occupies just as much room as it deserves, and no more, while the poet has it in his power, to express it, as fully, or as concisely as he thinks proper.

Secondly. Add to this, that the irregular ode requires no supernumerary or expletive epithets to eke out lines, none of those unmeaning subservient lines, that are introduced merely to eke out stanzas, and of which some of our modern regular odes exhibit such melancholy instances; in short, the irregular ode is not obliged to sacrifice a just arrangement, clear expression, or harmonious versification, to a chimerical and pedantic regularity, which has no foundation in true harmony, and is wholly foreign from the genius of our language.

Thirdly. You will please to consider, that if the author of a regular ode has a bad ear, and is unfortunate in the choice of the stanza, his readers must take it, for better for worse, through the whole poem, a grievance, to which the irregular ode is not liable; for there, if one stanza should be unhappily fancied, or inharmonious, we have a prospect of being relieved, and changing for the better in the next; perhaps too, the ear, in an ode of any length, may feel itself cloyed with the uniformity of a stanza so frequently repeated, and be relieved and gratified by the various melody of the irregular ode.

Fourthly. I must further observe, that although we should allow the composition of the irregular ode, to be, as Mr. Mason is pleased to assert, more easy, it imposes on the poet a necessity of versifying with greater care, and satisfying the ear with a melody more full and completely rounded. The harmony of versification cannot so easily make itself to be felt by the reader, when the stanza comes in a new and un-

foreseen form, as when the ear is habituated, and broken, as I may say, to the expected march of an uniformly repeated stanza. When the hearer is prepared for the return of the pause at regular intervals, he learns to mistake the mere technical arrangement of the lines for harmonious versification, and hardly allows himself to enquire, whether the stop is judiciously placed, or the period duly filled, so as to leave the ear perfectly satisfied. In the irregular ode there is no such deception, the ear is not imposed on, and any fault in the versification will be immediately perceived.

Fifthly. A correspondence of the sound with the sentiment is certainly a very great beauty, and the poet should endeavour to obtain it, whenever it may be had, without sacrificing more important things. This beauty may sometimes result from the happy force of a single word, sometimes it is produced by the structure and cadence of a single line, but is effected most forcibly and most generally by the arrangement and symmetry of a whole period *. Now, I believe it cannot be denied, and therefore I shall not waste words to prove, that a free stanza, which may be varied at will, and made light and airy, slow and plaintive, or swelling and sonorous, according to the subject matter, will give the poet a much better chance of attaining this excellence, whatever may be its value. The judicious break, the happy pause, the change of cadence, the long majestic march and energy divine, may all in their turns be excluded by a servile adherence to the uniformity of

* Example of the first :

Procumbit humi bos.

Of the second :

*Monstrum horrendum informe ingens cui lumen ademptum.
Sola in sicca secum spatiat^r Arenâ.*

Of the third :

*She bids you,
All on the wanton rushes lay you down,
And rest your gentle head upon her lap,
And she will sing the song that pleaseth you,
And on your eye-lids crown the god of sleep,
Charming your blood with pleasing heaviness,*

SHAKESPEARE.

stanza; and I cannot think of a single advantage, which attends this uniformity exclusively, except that of enhancing the difficulty of composition.

Such being the advantages which attend the irregular ode, it seems to be rather immaterial to enquire into the comparative difficulty of writing it; I shall only observe, that being simple and unaffected in its form, and disclaiming every thing elaborate and artificial, it is supposed to be much easier than in truth it is, and less credit is given to the author of an irregular ode for the pains and study he employs, than to those, who deal in more operose forms of poetry.

It cannot be denied, that a species of composition which adopts the construction of the rythmus, and even the sound of particular words to the subject must have its foundation in the genuine undepraved feelings of human nature. I have not a doubt within my mind of the irregular ode being the first form of composition adopted by mankind, in their first wild attempts at literature. Poetry has ever been the delight of men in the first stages of society: the earliest recitals of events among them have been in verse; this arises from the connexion between certain sounds and the feelings of the mind, as well as the memory. The first literary production, in an unpolished nation, where the pure dictates of nature prevailed, was a poem, and that poem an irregular ode. Whether the subject of the rude minstrelsy was the feather-cinctured chiefs, or dusky loves, the untutored feelings of the heart teaching expressions, and suggesting sounds attempered and attuned to that subject, the stanza varied with the sense, and the spontaneous descant became an irregular ode. I am very confident, that the death song and the war song which have such an influence on the spirits of american warriors, are irregular odes; and I am confirmed in my opinion, by finding that several specimens of the ancient poetry of uncivilized nations bear this form. In Scheffer's history of Lapland you will find two instances of the irregular ode, which have great poetical merit, and are well known by the english translations of them.

I shall conclude with expressing a wish, that these hasty reflections may be the means of exciting some poetical genius to make a trial of a species of composition, which, in my mind, is peculiarly susceptible of true sublimity.

MYRRHA:

AN

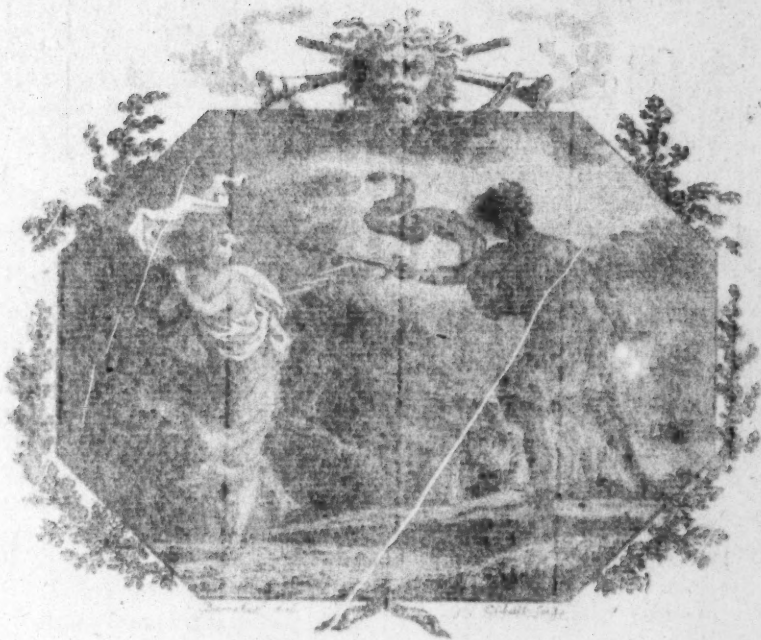
IRREGULAR ODE.

ARGUMENT.

IT may be objected, that scenes of horror, like the subject of the following little poem, ought rather to be covered with a veil, or consigned to oblivion, than introduced to the public eye, in the dress of poetry. For my justification, I shall resort to the authority of the old greek tragedians, who thought the dreadful stories of *Œdipus* and *Medea* not unfit for representation on the public stage. The mind loves to have her feelings roused, and I know no tale more apt to excite the emotions of terror and pity than that of *Myrrha*, as related by *Ovid*, whom I have followed, in his *metamorphosis*—It is this: *Myrrha* in early youth conceives a passion for her father *Cinyras*; every affectionate glance, every endearing expression, every paternal attention of the parent fatally, but innocently, contribute to nourish the criminal desires of the child. The fire consumes her vitals, her health rapidly declines, her frame is wasted away; her anguish of mind makes her look forward to approaching death as a desirable termination of her sufferings; her nurse is alarmed at this melancholy situation: she employs all her arts of insinuation to obtain possession of her dreadful secret, and at length extorts from her a discovery of her love.

The nurse, perceiving that *Myrrha* must inevitably fall the victim of her passion if she continued to suppress it, and determined to save her life even at the price of her character and virtue, employs herself first to devise the means of gratifying her wishes, and then, which was a task more difficult, to persuade *Myrrha* to employ those means.

The wife of *Cinyras*, and mother of *Myrrha*, was to assist at a solemn sacrifice, and the strictness of religion required that the lady should seclude herself from her husband sometime previous to it; the sacrifice too was to be performed in a distant part of the country. During the temporary separation which this occasioned, *Cinyras* felt certain wants, and applied to this nurse, who appears to have been, indeed, a very notable personage, for the means of supplying them; *Myrrha* was introduced to her father in the gloom of night and departed before the dawn of day, bashfulness and delicacy were the pretext; the intercourse continued for some time without suspicion, curiosity at last prevailed; the unhappy father introduced a light, while *Myrrha* slept, and beheld the criminality and shame, which night and silence had at first produced, and concealed so long.



MYRRA.

THE howling whirlwind swept the plain,
The peal'g thunder rock'd the ground ;
The headlong torrent swell'd again,
While, in his wasteful triumph roll'd around,
Herd, and flock, and trees, and corn,
The shepherd and his cot were borne ;
And Chaos, with a yell, exulting ran
To mar the beauteous works of nature and of man.

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...the victim of ... her life ... to de- ... more ...

The scene of *Alfred*, and marriage of Myrtle, the death of a Colonel
 Gordon, and the death of Myrtle, suggested that the latter should be
 made the subject of a novel, and was accordingly pursued to the end, with the
 usual happy ending. The subject of the novel, being the tem-
 porary separation of a young gentleman, Edward, from certain war, and
 his return to his home, the subject of the book, indeed, a very notable
 personage, for the purpose of bringing about, Myrtle was introduced to
 her father in the evening of the day after the death of the Colonel,
 and the scene of the book, the marriage, the marriage continued for
 some time without incident, and the end of the book, the marriage
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 and the end, which might be the end of the book, and the end
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MYRRA.

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 The pealing thunder rock'd the ground ;
 The headlong torrent swell'd amain,
 While, in his wasteful triumph roll'd around,
 Herds, and flocks and trees, and corn,
 The shepherd and his cot were borne ;
 And Chaos, with a yell, exulting ran
 To mar the beauteous works of nature and of man.

Ever and anon
 The palpitating flakes of ruddy light'ning shone ;
 Above—below—they run—they glare—
 With low and fearful howl
 The lion started from his lair,
 Meteors blazing thro' his hair,
 While on his head, in unctuous train,
 They hung—or kindled thro' his mane ;
 Rage and fear his eye-balls scowl,
 The pines and gnarled oaks before him bend ;—
 No more his custom'd haunts he knew,
 Nor thirsted now the prey to rend ;
 Wing'd, wing'd with fear he flew :
 Where waves infuriate vex the rocky steep
 He plung'd into the deep.

Wrapt in many a pitchy cloud
 Night on Hades call'd aloud ;—
 Associate, wake ! to feast thine ear,
 The mingled crash of ruin hear ;
 Associate, wake ! and see, to cheer thy sprite,
 Works of Chaos, works of Night ;
 Associate, haste, arise, receive, from destiny,
 A dire oblation meet for Erebus and me.
 Hark, hark—what shrieks redouble on the wind !
 Along the pathless waste,
 What pale, evanid phantom past ?—
 'Tis Myrrha,—faded form, and tortur'd mind !

Her garments rent, and rent her beauteous hair,
 Distilling dank the drops of beating rain ;
 The wind-wav'd briar, the brake, and tangled thorn
 Her tender limbs have torn,
 And wand'ring purple streams the polish'd iv'ry stain,—
 Cinyras displays the sword,
 Her vengeful sire, her lover now no more,
 He waves the brand, athirst for gore,
 To mark an impious deed with punishment abhorr'd.
 Oh wretched father ! doubly, doubly lost,
 Lost to strike, and lost to spare,
 Endless shame, and endless care
 Rush upon thy fatal head,
 Peace is gone, and honour fled,
 And hopes and schemes of good, by stygian whirlwinds tost.

The winds are hush'd—the notes of anguish flow ;
 Ceaseless, thro' the gloom they creep,
 Like streams in sparry cavern deep,
 Trickling constant, sad, and slow.—
 Spare me, visions of affright,
 Ye spectres, teeming thro' the shades of night !
 Heav'n is bursting o'er my head,
 The failing earth recedes where-e'er I tread,
 Unwilling to sustain the freight
 Of such a guilty thing's incumbent weight.
 Oh fatal change !
 Bewilder'd, lost, accurst I range,

Nor ought of outward horrors find
Dire,—as the change in this polluted mind.

Oh name for ever dreadful, ever dear !
Lov'd name of fire, no more to fill mine ear ;
No more to tune my matin song,
Amidst the virgin throng :
Oh virgin throng, would fates allow
I were your sister now !
To wear, like you, my golden hours ;
Spotless and sweet ye spring, as tender flow'rs ;
And forward look, with hallow'd awe, to prove,
Th' auspicious moment of connubial love.—
There was a time, my father's name
Diffus'd no blush, the cheek to stain,
Awak'd no wish the soul to pain,
Or tremble thro' the guilty frame ;
But sweet and tranquil, by the mossy cell,
Or rushy dell,
Flow'd attemper'd to the chords,
Flow'd in soft, spontaneous words,
The secret haunts of Echo found,
And bade the rural nymphs around
Their homespun ditties cease,
To join in choral strains of love, and piety, and peace.

Of love, and piety, and peace—dire change !
The furies round me range ;

The shriek—they dance—an hideous band,
 And all erect their hissing snakes,
 And one the curling venom takes,
 And gives it to my father's hand.—

“Arm thee for thy daughter's doom,

“Snatch the votive guilty bloom,

“Hurl it to the sisters fell,

“'Tis a garland meet to wreath

“Around the shrines of death,

“Or palaces of hell.

“Hurl to us the fatal charms,

“That, blessing, curst a father's arms.”

Dear, guiltless partner of a deed profane,

Oh spare—detested and ador'd—

To wash away, in blood, our common stain!

Oh drop the murd'rous sword;—

Thus abject, thus defil'd,

Am I not still thy child?

By all the joys my natal hour bestow'd,

When tears of gladness flow'd,

A pure, extatic flood;

By all a parent's tender fears,

That fondly watch'd my helpless years,

When playful at thy knees I stood;

By many a soft, delightful hour,

When my gay prattle, with amusive pow'r,

And melting influence stole,

Bland and gentle on thy soul,
 And, as they met with mine,
 Thy gracious eyes with doubled light would shine ;
 Oh spare !

Shall not these thine arm restrain ?
 Adjurations yet remain ——
 By the joys—accursed thought !
 Cease my tongue with horrors fraught. ——
 Oh night to mem'ry baneful, and to mem'ry dear !
 The rolling year
 Shall mark thee, in its course, for works of hate ;
 Round the sacrifice of ill
 Blood of innocents to spill,
 Annual, the hags of night shall congregate.
 All pow'rs of good that night resign their charge,
 And yelling fiends and harpies roam at large.
 Nor starry lamp, nor lunar gleam
 Thro' the murky vapours play ;
 Nor cheering light of village taper beam,
 To guide the trav'ler on his way.
 In earth below let vapours shine,
 Kindling, bursting from the mine,
 And flame sulphureous death,
 On many a wretch beneath.
 In heav'n above, with crimson glare,
 Undulating thro' the air,
 Let meteors sweep, portentous rolling on ;

While, smould'ring round th' abodes of sleep,
 Devouring flames thro' populous cities creep,
 Or torch its light funereal sheds,
 Sullen, o'er the mourners' heads,
 Where some fond mother wails her darling son.

The pow'rs unseen, with guilty skill,
 That weave th' indissoluble web of human ill,
 In hallow'd rites, and in the pious thought,
 Unwitting enginery of evil sought;
 And bade my mother join the mystic train,
 And seek the distant fane.—

While wafted perfumes from the altar blaz'd,
 And spicy volumes thro' the temple wreath'd,
 Her hands devote the matron rais'd,
 Her orisons she meekly breath'd,
 And, as the fragrance reach'd the sky,
 Call'd for blessings from on high;
 For blessings call'd, in accents mild,
 To crown her husband and her child.—

What was then the husband's task?
 What blessing did the daughter ask?—
 The husband and the daughter rush, to prove
 The fierce excesses of incestuous love.

In sounds of agony confus'd and wild
 I hear thee shriek, I hear thee rave;—
 Thy tresses on the ground are strew'd,

Thy bosom is with blood imbru'd ;—
 I hear thee curse thy birth ;
 I hear, I hear thee curse thy guilty child ;
 I see thee stretch'd along—I see thee tear the earth—
 To find a grave.—

What busy fiend, what curst malignant pow'r
 Rul'd my natal hour,
 In fair Lucina's semblance came,
 And touch'd the new-born babe, with stygian flame !
 Better, mine eyes had then for ever clos'd ;
 Better, had I lain expos'd
 On savage heath, or mountain wild ;
 Or, like some vile neglected thing,
 Dash'd against the savage shore
 Amidst the billows' roar ;
 Better, had serpents, with redoubled sting
 The heart yet guiltless found,
 And twin'd and twin'd my little limbs around ;
 Better, had vultures borne me to their nest,
 And deep ingulph'd the beak within my breast ;
 Or kites entomb'd the dire, portentous child.

The nurse's care, unhallow'd and unblest,
 Foster'd me, at the breast.
 The furies saw me to their purpose grow,
 Like beauteous plants, that rank with poison blow.
 The growth of stature and the rip'ning thought

To riper mischief wrought ;
 While, with my vital blood,
 I fed the serpent brood,
 That harmless seem'd and gentler than the dove,
 Nor future incest fear'd, in filial love ;
 Pleas'd its lustre to behold,
 Its glossy spires of verdant gold ;
 Midst my locks it freely play'd,
 Freely o'er my bosom stray'd,
 But soon a dragon vast, with dire control,
 And over shadowing wing,
 Possess'd my gloomy soul ;
 And brooding o'er, with mortal sting,
 Infernal rage instill'd,
 And all my veins with burning venom fill'd.
 From a small hidden spark my passion grew
 An all-consuming fire,
 Fed by unchaste desire ;
 Devour'd my pray'rs, devour'd my time,
 The loves and wishes of my youthful prime ;
 Devour'd my peace, my piety,
 Good thoughts, and fair reserves, and virgin decency ;
 And last devour'd my father too.

With some accursed spell,
 Or blandishments of hell,
 The front of guilt, that long my soul appall'd,
 An evil woman smooth'd ;

Priests of infernal rite,
 O'er-ruling influence of that horrid night :—
 Recoiling sense the pois'nous opiate sooth'd,—
 My half-reluctant hand she seiz'd ;
 Remorse, remorse had interpos'd,
 But interpos'd in vain ;—
 Her guilty voice the minion mischiefs rais'd,
 And pleasure's vile illusions round she call'd ;—
 Then fierce desires, a murky train,
 On faint remorse the doors of mem'ry clos'd.—
 My trembling steps she led
 To that accursed bed ;
 Then—wretched infant, curst e'er born,
 In gaining life lost and forlorn,
 What desert land—what savage cave,
 While I in madness writhe and agonizing rave,
 Shall hear thy first poor feeble cries ?
 Shall give to hated light thy more detested eyes ?

By what name shalt thou be stil'd ?—
 Art thou brother,—art thou child ?—
 I feel thee here with wild affright,—
 The monster soon shall see the light,—
 What stygian pow'r thy fate commands ?
 What impious deeds await thy little hands ?
 Thy mother's doom no more shall seem the worst,
 When thou shalt rise, more guilty and more curst.

The monstrous legends, fabled crimes,
 The story'd pangs of other times
 Shall live in thee.—The sister fiends, that wait,
 At Pluto's triple gate,
 Quench their flaming brands, in blood,
 And, with the baneful wood,
 O'er the portal of his halls,
 Along the flame-encinctur'd walls,
 In characters of woe describe thy fate.—
 She ceas'd.—From heav'n the lightning came,
 And wrapt her round, in sheets of flame.
 Etherial mischief, sacred fire,
 Weapon of th' almighty's ire,
 Devours the vitals ; scorches thro' the veins ;
 The solid melts ; the fluid drains.—
 'Tis done——'tis done——
 All human form is gone.
 And Myrrha lies, a spectacle of wrath.

V E R S E S

WRITTEN IN THE DARGLE, IN THE COUNTY OF WICKLOW.

HAIL fairy scenes, hail haunted ground,
Where elves and genii sport around,
And hear the rushing water's fall,
Or Echo to their revels call.

Oft will I to the haunts repair,
Where wild flow'rs scent the balmy air ;
Where oaks adorn the shaggy brow
And torrents murmur hoarse below,
Now white with foam, and bursting loud,
Now dash'd to many a misty cloud :
Or where the glassy surface sleeps,
That blackens with o'er-hanging steep ;
And many a tree that downward bends,
And from the parent rock impends,
Appears to woo, with eager arms,
The river's coy disdainful charms.

The hills their waving line unfold;
 Retiring soft and swelling bold,
 In many a shape, fantastic rise,
 And melt in azure to the skies.—
 Here Phœbus, with a lover's heat,
 Affails the naiads coy retreat,
 Between the mountains slopes his beam,
 And plays in gold along the stream;
 His vagrant light bewilder'd roves,
 Or sleeps ensnar'd among the groves.

'Twas here, perhaps, some chieftain bold,
 Some mighty man, in years of old,
 Profaning friendship's hallow'd name,
 When England's sons insidious came,
 Beneath the freeborn oaks defy'd,
 The fierce invader's tyrant pride,
 And heard, in every breeze, from far
 The shrieks of woe, the shouts of war,
 And saw from far the signal fire,
 On many a mountain's top aspire—
 Around the chief, a hardy band,
 Of fearless heart, and puissant hand,
 When pealing on the watch of night,
 Loud came the roar of distant fight,
 Have sternly clash'd the spear and shield,
 And fiercely claim'd the promis'd field;

Then rush'd, a headlong torrent, down
 To spoil the vallies once their own.—
 Returning red with english blood,
 Beneath these shades, perhaps, they stood;
 Spread the rude feast, and shar'd the prey,
 And heard the minstrel's solemn lay,
 Recount the prodigal of breath,
 The martial pride, th' illustrious death.

For here, in old heroic times,
 The minstrel wak'd his lofty rhymes;
 He tun'd the harp, he bade them flow,
 Attemper'd to the stream below.—
 When England would a land enthrall,*
 She doom'd the muses sons to fall;
 Left virtue's hand should string the lyre,
 And feed with song the patriot fire.
 Lo, Cambria's bards her fury feel;
 See, Erin mourns the bloody steel.
 To such a scene, to such a shade,
 Condemn'd, proscrib'd, the poet stray'd.
 The warrior rais'd his buckler high,
 To shade the son of harmony;

* Spenser, in his essay on the state of Ireland, among other measures for reducing this country to perfect subjection, proposes to extirpate the race of minstrels.—And Edward when he wished to complete the conquest of Wales, put the bards to death. Poets in all ages have been friends of liberty.

And while he fung with skill profound,
A grove of launces bristled round.

Oh still, methinks, these wilds retain,
The tokens of th' heroic train.
On ev'ry rock below, above,
Engrav'd I read the patriot love ;
And hear in ev'ry waving tree
A voice that whispers—liberty.
I read in ev'ry plant and flow'r,
“ 'Tis base to own a tyrant pow'r,”—
The stream that loudly roaring flows,
And o'er the rocks impetuous goes,
Would seem to chide, in fancy's ear,
The selfish aim, th' enervate fear.

A grateful horror dwells around,
The pow'rs are near—that awful sound !—
And now, the mystic forms I see ;
The genius of each sacred tree.
And you, ye softer tribes below,
That teach the bursting stream to flow,
I see you shoot athwart the glade,
Where moon-light breaks the chequer'd shade.

Sweet rural pow'rs, be ever near ;
With awful murmurs sooth mine ear.
So, ne'er may gothic art invade,
So, av'rice ne'er profane the shade ;

But taste preserve each sacred oak,
 Unconscious of the woodman's stroke.
 And Flora so perfume the plain,
 And bring her sweet tho' lowly train ;
 Not those array'd in gaudy dies,
 That proudly court the gazer's eyes ;
 Not those that stately gardens love,
 But humbler children of the grove,
 Sweet as the maid that sways my heart,
 With bashful charms that know not art,
 Retirement mild, and graceful fear,
 The modest blush, the dewy tear.

Sweet pow'rs, when thro' those haunts I steal,
 Your inspiration let me feel ;
 And see the sacred forms of song,
 Or stately march, or glance along ;
 The frowning warrior's awful sprite,
 With sword and mail of beamy light ;
 The regal pomp, the knightly train,
 The marshal'd hall, the lifted plain ;
 The virgin that untimely dy'd,
 In vernal beauty's roseate pride ;
 The youths that mourn'd her tomb around,
 Whose faithful tears bedew'd the ground.
 Oft let me parly with the shades,
 That haunt by night these solemn glades.

And let ideal bards be near,
 And airy harpings thrill mine ear,
 Now bursting loud—now sinking low—
 As the varying breezes blow.
 And may I oft a note retain,
 And pour it thro' my pensive strain.

Sweet scenes by nature sure design'd,
 A harbour for the pensive mind.—
 Another Sorgue*—a new Valcluse,
 And here shall other Petrarchs muse;
 Renounce the world, their friends forego.
 And banish joy, and cherish woe;
 Exalt the bold ambitious mind,
 To love the first of humankind,
 And early clos'd in virgin urn,
 Remember long and sadly mourn.—
 Oh boding muse, avert thine eyes,
 For that way—that way madness lies.—
 Oh never may I know the pain,
 Oh never pour so sad a strain.

* Sorgue a river running by Avignon in Provence, where Laura de Noves the mistress of Petrarch was born.

ODE TO SINCERITY.

ARISE, in majesty confest,
Sincerity, thou sacred day-spring of the breast
Thine eye the felon passions fear,
The mental monsters disappear;
Like prowling tribes, from Phœbus' ken,
With light unwonted struck and aw'd,
That hide, within the murky den;
Base fear, hypocrisy and fraud,
Deceit, like the hyæna fell,
And calumny, with ceaseless yell,
And low-born craft, and selfish art,
Shrink to the inmost windings of the hollow heart.

The clouds disperse—the vapours fly——
Wide o'er th' untroubled plain of blue translucent sky,
Effulgence mild, serenely bright,
A flood of glory waves its light;

Celestial symphonies resound,
 My heart expands——my soul is air——
 A spirit lifts me from the ground,——
 I hail the form divinely fair ;——
 Yes——Thou art here——th' elated soul
 Exulting owns thy proud control ;——
 She comes——in majesty confest,
 Sincerity, the sacred day-spring of the breast.

Auspicious to the race of man,
 The fates ordain'd thy birth ere eldest time began ;
 And bade the sons of earth, in thee,
 Bear the rich stamp of deity ;
 When innocence display'd her charms,
 The virgin blush of orient dye,
 And courage woo'd her to his arms,
 The chief of haughty heav'n-ward eye ;
 Within the temple of the mind,
 The god of light their wishes join'd,
 And ev'ry virtue hail'd the morn,
 When thou, their eldest hope, sincerity, wert born.

From crowds and courts thy parents fled ;
 They nurs'd thee in the low sequester'd peasant's shed ;
 For passions vile, with fury fir'd,
 Against thy tender youth conspir'd ;
 The trackless wild and shaggy glen,
 Where hunters rang'd and lions roar'd ;

The caves and huts of savage men,
 Thine infant footsteps first explor'd,
 'Till lur'd by freedom's awful strains,
 Thy light adorn'd the grecian plains;
 Then mighty Rome ador'd thy charms,
 And fed thy vestal flame, amidst the din of arms.

Thy sisters, truth and liberty,
 And gen'rous acts and aims thy beauteous offspring be;
 Chaste guardian of the sacred cells!
 Where each delighted virtue dwells,
 The faintest band thine influence boasts;
 By kindred intuition shown,
 From breast to breast of heav'nly hosts,
 Thro' thee seraphic thoughts are known;
 The prophet's lip divinely bold,
 Thro' thee was touch'd with fire of old,
 When, zealous for th' almighty's law,
 He smote the scepter'd wretch with shame and conscious awe

Thy pow'r the patriot bosom prov'd,
 By popular acclaim, or tyrant frowns, unmov'd;
 And, taught by thee, the fervent tongue
 Checks the bold strides of giant wrong;
 Erewhile, in academic shade,
 Thou led'st th' ingenuous steps of youth;
 And, taught by thee, the porch survey'd
 The radiance of thy sister truth;

Thou with the just athenian * dwelt ;
 Thy mighty charms the Catos felt ;
 Inspir'd by thee, by thee sustain'd,
 The rage of punic foes proud Regulus disdain'd.

But friendship, chief, is all thine own,
 She droops, she languishes, she dies, when thou art flown ;
 Her soul thou art, her genial heat,
 Informing nerve, and vital beat ;
 † Thine is the gen'rous ecstasy,
 Suffusive, mantling o'er the face,
 Th' expansive heart, the kindling eye,
 The straining of a dear embrace ;
 She flies from art, she scorns disguise,
 But most from fraud, and falsehood flies ;
 Thou too must nurse the little loves,
 And tend their roseate bow'rs, their springs, and myrtle groves.

And what is Hymen wanting thee ?
 The fiend of dire despair and cruel forcery,
 Evok'd by priests with mutter'd spell ;
 From murky pits of deepest hell ;
 His sway becomes a tyrant's reign,
 Unless thou mak'st his altar bright,
 His silken band a galling chain,
 Unless thou lend'st his torch thy light ;

* Aristides.

His altar else will soon exhale,
 A lurid smook, a pois'nous gale ;
 His torch a stygian brand become,
 To guide the mourner's foot, and show th' untimely tomb.

Chaste nymph, may ne'er brutality,
 Or spleen, or rancour base, or savage cruelty,
 Assume thy form, thy name profane,
 To give the feeling bosom pain ;
 May woman's soft and pliant soul
 Thy pure refining cares employ,
 Left fashion, with her vile control,
 The native innocence destroy,
 By monitors unworthy taught
 To hide th' exalted glowing thought,
 Or education's fordid toil
 With craft, and mean disguise the virgin bosom foil.

Where mazy paths of life divide,
 Thy pure and steady light, shall be my faithful guide ;
 Full oft deceiv'd, believing still,
 Distrust shall ne'er my bosom fill ;
 No—till I sink in endless sleep,
 Thy wonted influence thou shalt hold ;
 My tongue thine hallow'd law shall keep,
 Not rudely firm, nor harshly bold ;
 Come, fill my soul, inform my heart,
 Preserve me pure from fordid art,

Unbrib'd by wealth, by pow'r unaw'd,
To flatt'ry's menial task, or base degen'rate fraud.

Chaste pow'r! if, still, with hallow'd awe,
From earliest youth, my tongue hath kept thy law,
Unbias'd from the steady plan,
By fortune's frown, or spite of man,
Thy sacred guerdon let me find,
Some kindred soul, responsive heart;
His eye shall read mine inmost mind,
I'll make him of myself a part;
But never let me prove the sting,
That in the wounded soul doth spring,
When poor credulity must mourn,
In sad funereal weed, round parted friendship's urn,

One dearer blessing, yet, be mine,
And life's aspiring aims, and pageants I resign;
Give me some faithful female breast,
And let my weary soul have rest;
Too long, too long, with many a wound,
My heart hath bled where most it lov'd,
When seeking thee, deceit I found;
And hop'd for truth, and falsehood prov'd;
Give me, if such a maid there be,
A maid inform'd by truth and thee,
Untainted, in this cruel age,
With fatal thirst of gold, and dissipation's rage.

O D E

TO THE

M O O N.

ADVERTISEMENT.

ALMOST all writers are liable to the mistake, of supposing, that what is perfectly familiar and intelligible to themselves, must be equally plain to their readers; and this is an abundant source of obscurity. I must confess I was under the influence of this error, when I first published the Ode to the Moon, and consequently was not a little surprised, to find it arraigned for obscurity and want of connection. I had like Gray, on a similar occasion* paid my readers the compliment, of supposing them so well informed and intelligent, as to render notes explanatory needless. But I found myself mistaken; at least the Reviewers, who, by the by, are not always very good or very fair judges of poetical merit, were pleased to remark that in tracing the errors of the moon, I myself had wandered out of the regions of common sense. It may not be amiss, therefore, to apprise the reader, that my object in the following poem was to collect in one view, the most remarkable properties of the moon, her beauty and splendor, her utility, her power of producing the flux and reflux of the sea, the imaginary qualities attributed to her by ancient mythology and fable—the influence, which she is now supposed to possess over the vegetable and animal system, and above all, her powerful effects on the human mind.—Such was the scope of this poem; the nature of lyrical composition would not admit that I should detail this plan, or pursue it with the fulness and precision of didactic poetry; but if the indulgent reader will take the trouble of carrying in his mind this sketch of the writer's design; I flatter myself, he will find the Ode to the Moon neither wholly obscure, nor devoid of method and connection.

* See Grays advertisement to the progress of poetry, a pindaric ode.

ARGUMENT.

THE moon invoked, from the bowers, where, according to the old mythological poets, she is supposed to keep Endymion entranced.—In what imperial majesty the full moon appears, surrounded by the stars and planets, while she and they, according to the platonic notion, roll on, in their respective courses, to the music of the spheres.—The appearances produced, by the moon's gravitation to the earth, as her primary planet, and to the sun, as centre of the solar system.—The effect of these two different gravitations, sometimes conspiring, sometimes opposed to each other, compounded with the progressive motion of the moon, along with the earth in the terrestrial orbit round the sun to confound the form of the lunar orb, and render the motion of the moon sometimes direct, and sometimes retrograde.—The progress of the moon thro' the clouds and meteors of heaven, in her nocturnal course.—Supposed power of the moon in shedding mists and vapours, and communicating certain powers, whether noxious or salutary, to plants and herbs; and also of diffusing certain vapours or exhalations that have a powerful effect on the human frame.—Beauty and utility of the moon's light—the beasts of prey and midnight spoilers avoid it.—Effect of gravitation towards the moon in producing tides.—Effect of the moon, in changing the weight of the air, that presses on the surface of the human body, and thereby disordering the brain.—Description of madness.—Of a mad-house.—An amiable young woman deprived of reason.—Persons of genius and strong imagination more liable to madness.—Madness, in such persons, a more melancholy spectacle from a recollection of the sad reverse.—The author deprecates from himself, that greatest of all calamities, loss of reason.

O D E

TO THE

M O O N.

CHANGEFUL orb, mysterious pow'r,
Look from the meridian tow'r,
Where, with thy lov'd Endimion biding,
Morpheus keeps
The fount of dewy sleeps,
The boy's soft eyes in downy trances hiding,
And wreaths around his head
No common flow'rs, that bright and gay
Court Aurora's wanton ray,
Or bold and obvious o'er the field

To vagrant gales their flaunting bosoms yield ;
 But flow'rs, a sacred birth, that chastly bloom,
 Drink the moisture of the gloom,
 And in the morn. expire, within their virgin bed ;
 Or bands of vapour light
 As gossamer, and white
 As drifted snow,
 And lucid as the dawn,
 Or gaily-tinctur'd fillets drawn
 From heav'n's assuring bow.

Changeful orb, the song inspire,
 Descant bold, unwonted fire ;
 Let the numbers range, like thee,
 In harmoniz'd variety ;
 Let me feel thy potent spell,
 Let thy magic influence dwell
 On my brain,
 And vibrate thoughts, and kindle words,
 And teach the full-resounding chords,
 To speak the wonders of thy proud domain.

When seated, like a youthful queen,
 By meaner beauties circled round,
 'Midst heav'nly choirs in state majestic seen,
 Thou com'st with light imperial crown'd,
 The spirits, that with guiding hand
 Planets roll, and stars command,

Pour the choral warblings wide,
 Bid the deep melodious tide
 From orb to orb*, from sphere to sphere,
 The floating waves of music bear;
 The liquid notes thro' space unbounded thrill,
 And sun and earth and stars the diapason fill.

* The planets, including the sun and moon, are seven in number; an observation which instantly reminded the ancient philosophers, of the heptachord or seven stringed lyre. This lyre comprised two tetrachords, united by one common sound, which in the diatonic genus, give the following series of tones: *fi, ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*. Suppose the Moon represented by *fi*, Mercury will then be represented by *ut*, Venus by *re*, the Sun by *mi*, Mars by *fa*, Jupiter by *sol*, and Saturn by *la*; thus, the distance of the Moon *fi* to Mercury *ut*, will be a semitone; that of Mercury *ut* to Venus *re*, will be a tone; that is to say, the distance from Venus to Mercury will be double that of Mercury to the Moon. Such was the first celestial lyre.

Two strings were afterwards added, to designate the interval between the Earth and the Moon, and the distance from Saturn to the fixed stars. The two tetrachords, comprised in this new lyre, were sometimes supposed disjunct, and strung according to the chromatic genus, which gives proportions between the series of tones, different from those of the diatonic. Here is an example of this new lyre.

FIRST TETRACHORD.

From the Earth to the Moon	-	-	a tone.
From the Moon to Mercury			a half tone.
From Mercury to Venus	-	-	a half tone.
From Venus to the Sun		-	a tone and half.

SECOND TETRACHORD:

From the Sun to Mars	-	-	a tone.
From Mars to Jupiter	-	-	a half tone.
From Jupiter to Saturn	-		a half tone.
From Saturn to the fixed stars	-		a tone and half.

From the golden fount of morn,
 Rising with replenish'd horn
 To pour the floods of undulating light,
 O'er the level plains of night;
 Thou dost, with divided care,
 Thrive the mazy path in air;
 And now, thy sister earth with fond affection tend,
 Now, to the sun with humble rev'rence bend,
 And oft return, with kind delay,
 And often seek, as lovers use,
 Some amorous excuse,
 Near the kindred orb to stay.

As this scale gives seven notes instead of six, which complete the octave, the interval from Saturn to the fixed stars, and that from Venus to the sun, is sometimes diminished, by a tone, in order to obtain the most perfect of consonances. Other variations have been introduced into the scale, by placing the sun below, instead of above, Venus and Mercury.

To apply these proportions to the distances of the heavenly bodies, each tone is supposed to be equivalent to 126,000 stadia, 4762 leagues, and assuming this for an element, there was no difficulty, in measuring the distance between the earth and the starry heavens. This space increases or diminishes as the proportion is more or less attached to certain harmonical proportions, in the preceding scale, the distance of the stars from the sun, and that of the sun from the earth, are in the ratio of a fifth or of three tones and an half.

Such was the chimerical system adopted by the lively imagination of the early philosophers of Greece; respecting the harmony of the celestial bodies. The foregoing account is extracted from the travels of Anacharsis, vol. 3, page 184. of the english translation.

Hark ! thy pied courfers beat
 The starry-pav'd retreat,
 With sounding hoof, and roll'd thro' many a cloud
 That the silver axles shroud,
 Half reveal'd,
 Half conceal'd,
 Thy glitt'ring chariot moves from far ;
 While, beneath, in frolic maze,
 Glancing quick the meteor plays,
 And elemental squadrons rush to war.
 It moves, it dashes round the treasures
 Of future raist, and hail, and storm, and rain
 Heap'd along th' etherial plain.
 Lightly o'er the sky
 Disperst they fly,
 Or seeking earth in gentlest show'rs,
 Bathe, but bruise not vernal flow'rs,
 And feed Pomona's hope, and shepherd's lusty pleasures.

Oft, in thy path thou meet'st the wain of night ;
 At first, with wild affright,
 She stays her dusky team,
 Fearful, lest the god of day,
 With rude usurping beam,
 Had rush'd, to seize her old legitimate sway ;
 But soon discerns, in thee,
 Th' associate of her reign,
 O'er th' illimitable waste domain ;

And now, from terror free,
 In gratulation bland,
 Her dewy gifts she pours, with bounteous hand.
 Distill'd from baneful flow'rs,
 The tribute falls in chilly show'rs,
 From steaming mine, or putrid fen,
 From noisome cells of dying men,
 The city's crowd, the reeking forge,
 The cavern'd vent, where inward flames disgorge,
 Empoison'd elements arise,
 Night, along th' expansive skies,
 In urns of lead collects them all,
 Concentred bane, on earth to fall;
 The cold solanum, deadly yew
 Circled round with vapours blue,
 And ev'ry plant that Colchos knew,
 The copious seeds of evil drain
 By thee sublim'd ;—each verdant vein
 Labours with juice malign and dark,
 That taints the vital flood, and kills the genial spark.

Many a subtle sprite
 Floats in thy magic light,
 Sailing wanton here and there,
 Touching wide at ev'ry sphere ;
 And, as the bee, with chemic pow'r,
 Some virtue draws from ev'ry flow'r,

Each, in his voyage thro' the deeps on high,
 From ev'ry lucid orb that rolls along the sky,
 Mysterious charms, and stellar things
 Of high pervading influence brings,
 Then stoops for good or ill to men,
 And thro' their pores
 Instills the wonder-working stores ;
 They nimbly course, they throb, they beat,
 Thro' ev'ry vital feat ;
 Swifter than glancing thought,
 Some strange effect is wrought,
 That calculation shames, and study's vauntive ken.

When thou wouldst thy poisons blend,
 And on earth infection send,
 By the halo round
 In a magic circle bound,
 Thy beams retire ;
 And, mix'd and temper'd there
 With exhalations breath'd from Saturn's sphere,
 Contagious blast and livid death transpire.

But now, on milder purpose bent,
 Thou bid'st the noxious damps recede,
 And forth thy gracious messengers are sent,
 With silver light to clothe the mead ;
 Along the dewy green,
 Where fairy prints are seen,

Along the mountain's hoary side,
 Along the streams that smoothly glide,
 O'er the hamlet, o'er the lea,
 O'er the gently-swelling sea,
 Where they tremble, where they play,
 O'er the spire and castle grey,
 The waving trees, the sullen waste,
 Thy beams, a gorgeous robe, their floating tissue cast.

To thee the screech-owl cries,
 The wolf to thee, and all the tribes of prey
 That shun the honest day,
 And shrink from human eyes.
 They call thee not to gild the midnight hour;
 They deprecate thy pow'r;
 They call thee, with a dusky cloud,
 Thy beauteous face to shroud;
 'Till the nightly spoil is won,
 'Till the feast of blood is done,
 'Till the hand of sleep is spread
 O'er the eye-ball glaring red,
 And deep within his den the glutt'd savage lies—
 Nor beasts alone that prowls for food,
 More savage men thine influence feel:
 Thy virgin presence daunts
 The robber, in his haunts;
 Th' assassin stays th' uplifted steel,
 And, when he sees the victim nigh,

And when the ponyard thirsts for blood,
 Smote by thy sacred eye,
 He feels an icy dart
 Transfix his coward heart,
 And flies.

At thine awful call,
 From their wat'ry hall,
 Where pillar'd waves sustain the dome,
 And fretted vaults of sculptur'd foam ;
 The rising tritons pipe around,
 Their sister nereids at the sound advance,
 They join in mystic dance,
 And roll the treasures of the vast profound,
 An off'ring due to thee,
 Whate'er thine influence be,
 Apparent queen,
 Of spells, and mystic works, and witchery unseen.

Ha !—it flashes on my brain—
 Give me—give some horrid strain.—
 Th' * incumbent air confesses
 The baneful freight
 Of lunar beams,
 Shot forth in viewless streams ;

* Dr. Mead in his treatise de imperio solis et lunæ, endeavours to account for the influence of the moon on the human brain, on the same principle of gravitation, by which Sir Isaac Newton explains the theory of tides.

And, with unwonted weight,
 The brain to chaos presses.
 Æther falls—it crushes
 Thought—the blood with tide unequal rushes,
 Hurried, hurried thro' the veins,
 Throbs, and wild tumultuous pains,
 Fiercely thrilling, keenly beating,
 With infernal ardours heating ;
 And now—subsiding to a leaden flow
 Still and languid, cold and low,
 The black infected fluids feebly creep,
 Like those lethean streams, where ghosts for ever weep.

Madness, with her moody band,
 Owns thy pleni-lunar hand ;*
 Her matted locks in wild amazement stare ;
 With fiery red her eye-balls glare ;
 Her mouth suffus'd with bloody foam,
 In airy voids her glances roam
 To seek the forms of pain ;
 And ah ! no voids to madness—she
 Peoples them all with dire variety ;
 Demons circle round her head,
 Harpies tend her thorny bed,
 And lakes of fire expand, and seas of blood,
 And fury passions jar,

* I have risked the word pleni-lunar after the example of Milton, who has the expression "inter-lunar cave."

With wild tempestuous war,
 And shapeless horrors rise, and shades that kill,
 And ever-varying clouds of nameless ill,
 Along the dire horizon brood :
 A thousand forms of guilt, remorse and pain,
 All hideous hateful things compose her fallen reign.
 Stranger to repose,
 A deadly pale her hollow cheek o'erflows ;
 Smote by the summer's sun and winter's wind,
 The restless corse with eager famine pin'd ;
 And now, with rending hand her hair she grasps,
 Now to her naked breast the galling chain she clasps.
 Madness, I know thee by thy yell,
 Eldest born of hell.

Oft, at midnight hour,
 Madness, I've mus'd beside thy bow'r.
 The walls preclude the human sight,
 The roof alone receives the light ;
 From the living tomb,
 Thro' the silent gloom,
 Faintly darts a sickly gleam ;
 The nightly taper sends a beam,
 To mark the chamber of dismay,
 Where, remov'd from light of day,
 The tortur'd wretch is bound ;
 No parent, friend, or comfort nigh,

No soothing hand, no pitying eye,
 The clanging whips resound,
 The horrid keeper's frown is there,
 The shrieks of rage, and pain, and fear
 O piteous was that moan !
 And now, a deeper groan
 Succeeds—the struggle of imprison'd breath,
 The long drawn note of agonizing death.

Pause, oh ! pause, thou din of fear ;
 Thro' the darkness gliding mild,
 Far other strains I hear,
 Sweet as woodland notes and wild ;
 Strange melody—they sink—and now they swell ;
 Tales of unconscious misery they tell ;
 Bursts of fairy music flow,
 Softly-soothing sounds impart
 Pangs, that harrow up the heart,
 More than shrieks of woe,
 More, than conflicting nature's cry,
 When direst forms of death are nigh ;
 When torments search the quiv'ring vein,
 And weary life contends with pain ;
 They tell, how very soon,
 In happy being's noon,
 In vernal beauty's roseate pride,
 When hope with promise warm,
 And pleasure's halcyon charm,

In smiling prospect, show'd the level tide;
 A sultry blight, a livid flame,
 Devouring madness came
 And challeng'd for her own the bud of youth,
 And teeming gems of piety and truth,
 And bade her ruthless demons rove,
 With hurried ravage, thro' the gentle mind,
 And tear that breast, by heav'n assign'd,
 The fair unfullied shrine of innocent love.

But frenzy chief, with fierce control,
 Goads, goads the tuneful soul;
 Lo! by her hand, in shiver'd fragments hurl'd,
 The sacred mirror, that express'd
 The maker's image, full confess'd,
 In fairest forms of this sublunar world;
 The feelings all in outrage borne;
 The wond'rous net perplex'd and torn,
 Where mem'ry erst, by genius taught,
 Immortal visions caught;
 A viewless train, the furies spread
 Their mantle o'er the poet's head;
 Hell-painted texture, warping round
 A curtain close, a gloom profound;
 With horrid strains all holy things they chase,
 And pour th' expansive veil o'er nature's goodly face,
 No more, the mind, with grateful change,
 Th' ideal train arrays;

Fancy no more, in ample range,
 With young creation plays ;
 One dread unvaried form is nigh,
 And fills, for ever fills the fascinated eye.

Oh ! dim eclipse of reason's light !
 Disastrous night !
 Without all hope of day !
 When o'er the moon terrestrial shades prevail,
 And plunge in blood her visage pale,
 With pious hand a votive crowd
 Clash the pealing cymbal loud,
 To free the struggling ray ;
 And solemn strains, and mutter'd spells resound,
 To chase the spirits of the vast profound,
 That rise, with impious pow'r,
 To seize her hallow'd bow'r,
 And give the realms of night to stygian shades a prey.
 But say, what strain shall wisdom find,
 What spell, to free th' eclipsing mind ?
 That Hebrew minstrel's hand of yore,
 The troubled spirit could restore,
 The virtuous numbers flow'd like precious balm,
 And o'er the wounded soul diffus'd an holy calm ;
 They flow no more.

O moon ! thy radiant streams I drink,
 Awake to feel, and calm to think,

I see thine orb of silver wane,
 I see thee fill thy crescent horn,
 I see thee chase the starry train,
 Slowly melting into morn,
 Enjoy thy charms, and hail thy ray,
 Free from the terrors of thy sway :
 But shouldst thou, in thy future path,
 Behold me mark'd by heav'nly wrath,
 A spectacle, to show mankind
 The melancholy waste of ruin'd mind ;
 Should madness come, with horrid phantasms fraught,
 To taint the source of thought ;
 And blear illusions sense invade*,
 And notions vain the mind o'ershade,
 Soon may thy filken lustre wave
 O'er my new-made grave.

* In this passage, I had in my mind some observations in Dr. Arnold's treatise on madness, an ingenious work, and well worth the attention of the reader.—He divides madness into two species—ideal and notional—blear illusion is intended to point out the former species, the latter is designed under the description of notions vain.

H E A L T H,

AN

IRREGULAR ODE.

OH thou, that can'st to being lend
It's brightest charms, thou surest friend,
Of poverty and toil;
Oh come, in russet stole array'd,
Sweet blooming child of strength and temperance,
Capricious, lovely maid,
In measures light, thy sportive steps advance.
Round thee call the zephyr band,
Lead the pleasures, hand in hand,
Innocent and gay delight
Young ideas, fancies bright.
The meanest things thy smile endears,
The darkest scene thy presence cheers.
While borne around on gladsome wing,

Thou bid'st the peasant at his labour sing,
 And force subsistence from the rugged soil;
 The scanty comforts of his humble state
 Afford a brighter fate,
 Than all the pomp that eastern thrones display,
 Barbaric gold, and gems, and proud imperial sway.

When health was born, the expanse of nature smil'd;
 And brighter flow'rets deck'd the spangled earth,
 In gratulation, at the birth,
 Of that auspicious child;
 The song of birds resounded thro' the grove,
 And all the living kinds renew'd their leagues of love.
 Nor Mars with hostile influence reign'd,
 Nor leaden Saturn had th' ascendant gain'd;
 The dog-star slept, within his lurid sphere;
 And each ascendant orb, and every pow'r
 That stellar influence sheds,
 O'er created heads,
 On that auspicious hour,
 Rose gentle and benign,
 Of love, and peace, and blest fertility the sign;
 The star of Venus shone with peerless ray,
 And posted to the twins, to meet the god of day.

When blessed, blessed health was born,
 Nor blighting wind, nor taking air,

Nor gloomy cloud, nor torrid glare
 Deform'd the goodly morn ;
 Nor whirlwind plough'd the salt profound,
 Nor earth-quakes heav'd the trembling ground,
 Nor comet roll'd his dire portentous train,
 Nor wav'd his horrid hair, to shake from far,
 Fell harbinger of human pain,
 Famine and pestilence and war ;
 The soft'ring source of light and life was seen,
 All temp'rate and serene,
 To hold his glorious march,
 And sweep his path oblique, along th' ecliptic arch.

The dryads brown and oread maids
 Nurst thee, 'midst their hills and shades.
 The naiads bore thee to their coldest springs,
 To Dirce's fountain, Peneus chill,
 And Aganippe's limpid rill.
 Full many a rural sound
 Lull'd thee to sleep,
 The low of oxen, and the bleat of sheep,
 Or voice of tender kid from airy steep ;
 And shepherd's pipe with artless note,
 Responsive to the linnet's throat,
 Borne on the breeze, and undulating round.
 Then wert thou cradled on the zephyr's wing,
 With softest down o'erspread ;

The breezes wav'd around thy head,
 And tufts of gossamer compos'd thy nest.
 From heath and thyme, and ev'ry herb, that grows
 O'er the steep mountain's low'ring brows,
 From ev'ry silken bell, and flow'ret pale;
 That paints th' enamell'd vale,
 A thousand balmy sweets the genii stole;
 Pursued the bees nectareous toil,
 Then wasted round the fragrant spoil,
 And winnow'd the bland air, their treasures to dispense.

Fled, from the noisome damps, and gloom profound,
 That wrap the populous city round,
 From luxury, that sinks on beds of down,
 And revel swoln and pale,
 And siren sloth's enchanted bow'rs,
 With sun-burnt reapers, and the woodman brown,
 I've seen thee breast th' invigorating gale;—
 And draughts of life with every breeze inhale.—
 Hark, that jolly, jolly song.—
 Behold the rustic throng;—
 Crown'd with wheat, and mountain flow'rs,
 With jocund steps, they pace the mead,
 And harvest home in blameless triumph lead.—
 I've seen thee, health, anticipate the dawn,
 Pacing with footsteps light, the dewy lawn;
 And heard thee call thy florid train;—
 "The hounds uncouple, swell the horn,

- " Beat the covert, rouse the morn ;
 " The stag unharbour'd seeks the plain,—
 " Down the vallies, up the steep,
 " Let the straining courser sweep.
 " Let him dash thro' coverts dim,
 " Thro' the roaring torrent swim ;
 " To yonder city turn thine eye,
 " Where brooding clouds of dark infection lie ;
 " Come, trace with me, the meadows fair,
 " And drink in life and joy, with draughts of purest air.

Along the tawny sands and shelves,
 I've heard, with thee, the billow's roar,
 Dashing on the pebbled shore ;
 And seen thee sport, among the dapper elves ;
 Where-e'er the birds of ocean roam,
 That shrilly scream, and wander wide,
 Light they tread the briny foam,
 Light the sea-born gale bestride ;
 While the tritons, from beneath,
 Fill the conch with vocal breath,
 Piping to th' unwieldy flock,
 Of seals and orcs, and monsters of the main,
 That leave the dark recesses of the rock,
 And roll along the liquid plain ;
 Obedient to the call, they seek the land,
 And bask, profusely stretch'd, on hills of tepid sand.

Oft, hast thou fled, capricious maid,
 The haunt of freedom, and the plains,
 Where patriot ardour glows,
 And ev'ry art and ev'ry science reigns :
 And oft, thy wayward feet have stray'd,
 Where, groaning with the gold of southern Ind,
 Indignant Tagus flows.—
 Why dost thou love to dwell,
 Where clouds of ignorance impervious roll,
 Heap'd, each on each, a leaden atmosphere ;—
 Cheerless and drear ?
 Thine influence cannot reach th' infected soul :
 For ruthless tyranny, combin'd
 With superstition's foulest form,
 From dungeon deep and monkish cell,
 Sends forth the lurid storm,
 That, scatter'd wide, the bloom of genius bears ;
 Wild, from the root, the growth of virtue tears,
 And glooms a tenfold night, on man's imbruted mind.

And why, capricious maid,
 When youth and innocence invoke thine aid,
 Why fades thy dimple sleek,
 Thy roseate hue, from the soft virgin's cheek ?
 From plain to plain, from sky to sky,
 Her weary steps thy flight pursue ;
 Her gentle sighs thy presence woo ;

Still, still relentless dost thou fly ;
 And in thy place, a ruthless band,
 Diseases keen, extend their iron hand,
 O'er the soft mansion of untainted thought,
 With dawning hopes, ethereal wishes, fraught ;
 And thro' the kind and peaceful breast,
 While weary pantings stay the lab'ring breath,
 With some unwonted weight oppress,
 Unutterable anguish spread.
 Then sinks the beauteous head,
 In early doom unmeet,
 Drooping with the damps of death ;
 Like a fair lily, pale and sweet,
 That mourns the north-wind's tyrant pow'r,
 Or on its stalk declines, beneath the driving show'r.

Oh health, how blindly dost thou rove !
 Thou dearest gift of heav'n,
 Like gold, at random giv'n ;
 Causeless, alike, thine hate and love.
 Why, from the bounteous hand and noble heart,
 Profusely dost thou run,
 To pour thy golden boon, all froward as thou art,
 On Epicurus' sty, and riot's thoughtless son ?
 Why blast the lover's hope, and maiden's truth ;
 Yet, with licentious youth,
 In seats of riot dwell ?

Where mænades infuriate howl,
 And, chang'd by that enchanted bowl,
 Circean monsters yell ;—
 Why roll, with wild desire,
 Unhallow'd thoughts to feed,
 And wake licentious deed,
 In tides of purple fire,
 Throbbing, bursting every vein,
 'Till frenzy fire the heated brain ?

Capricious nymph, why dost thou flee,
 When anxious myriads wait
 Th' eventful crisis of the public weal,
 And raise the suppliant hands, and eyes, and voice to thee ?
 Ev'n while a single breast,
 With patriot cares possést,
 A single arm, with warlike might endued,
 Devoted to the task of public good,
 Suspended, holds a nation's trembling fate.
 " Come, radiant health, from that serene abode,
 " Fast by the throne of God,
 " The darling of our wishes heal ;
 " Oh hear a nation's cries, and with our guardian stay !
 Far distant borne, thou wing'ft thy way,
 Nor dost thou leave a blank.—When thou art fled,
 The family of pain
 Advance, a pale and ghastly train,
 Ruthless and dread,

To blast th' exertions of the godlike mind,
 That grasps the expansive weal of human kind,
 And humble, in the dust, th' elated thought,
 With wisdom's glorious birth, and heav'nward projects fraught.

Capricious maid !

Then, haply, thou art found,
 Stretch'd on th' unwholesome ground,
 In slumbers sweet and sound,
 With the poor toil-worn peasant laid,
 While rains the straw-crown'd tenement pervade ;
 Or in the damp and chilly cave,
 Where sparry volumes from the roof
 Fantastic wind,
 Sole shelter from the pelting storm,
 When whirlwinds drear the face of things deform,
 And ease, and peace, and pity fly aloof,
 With the poor outcast wanderer,
 The meagre wretch, by cold and famine pin'd,
 That strays, he knows not where,
 While lightnings glare around and tempests rave !

Why dost thou steel the ruffian's murd'rous arm,
 And giant frame, to work the mortal harm ?
 Why pour the miscreants forth, whom rapine feeds,
 Beneath the shades of night, to prowl for bloody deeds ?
 Why, from the north attend the swarming cloud,
 Thick, thick as locusts warping on the wind,

A fierce relentless brood,
 Athirst for human blood,
 The brutal hordes with despotism combin'd?
 Wide o'er the desolated plains they crowd,
 They sweep, with dissonant and hellish cry,
 And raze the structure fair of heav'nly liberty.

Shall such, exulting, own thy precious boon?—
 Oh blast their impious hope;
 The monstrous rout of God and man accurst.—
 I see th' almighty arm in vengeance bar'd,
 The ministers of wrath prepar'd;
 Infections, heap on heap, subdue the noon,
 And tow'r in columns to the starry cope.
 Famine and death, in ceaseless torrents burst;
 And withering damps, and silent slaughter spread
 A thousand forms of death on ev'ry noxious head.
 And blasphemy resounds, despair, and frenzy reign,
 And desolation stalks along the flooded plain,
 With stroke continuous, while the maker's hand,
 Smites, smites the rebel band
 That mar his beauteous work, and scorn his high command.

Oh let me from the scene of horror flee;
 To genial climes and happy isles,
 Where lovely nature smiles,
 Like beauty's queen, emergent from the-deep,
 While on the level brine the sun-beams sleep,

I haste thy votary.
 With vine-leaves crown'd and clusters fair,
 O blessed health, thy radiant plumes expand;
 Winnow the buxom air;
 And beckon, o'er th' atlantic main,
 Exhausted pleasure's jaded train,
 To where thou tak'st thy stand,
 High on th' aerial cliff,
 To mark the tempest-beaten skiff,
 Or pace, with thee, Madeira's breezy strand.

Where art thou fled, borne on the blast,
 Wide o'er the illimitable waste?
 On tropic winds, I see thee hurl'd
 To greet the genius of the southern world.
 Far, in thy flight, thou shun'st the vales,
 Where Java's poison loads the gales.
 In lonely majesty retir'd,
 He dwells, where sea-born gales pervade
 His isles, with torrid ardours fir'd;
 And giant plants diffuse impervious shade,
 Where thousand speckled snakes resort,
 And painted birds of thousand hues disport.
 Say, dost thou scale with him th' o'er-arching steep,
 Where trees majestic shade the deep,
 And in the brine their foliage lave,
 Or nod in cadence to the wave;
 Or range, where herbs profuse enrobe

The verdant shore,
 Or the dark shades explore,
 The sanctuaries dim of Sylvan and of Pan,
 Impervious to the foot of man,
 For leaf, or flow'r, or fruit of healing might,
 To scare the ghastly forms of wild affright?
 Or dost thou, to the salutary land,
 Invite the way-worn band,
 Whose vent'rous keel hath circled round the globe?

The hardy sailor's heart within him droops,
 And the proud warrior's crest in dire dejection stoops;
 To thee, with faint and feeble cries,
 They raise their hands, they raise their swimming eyes;
 Nor raise to thee in vain:
 For, from the floating cell,
 Where steams mephitic dwell,
 From briny exhalations of the main,
 That shoot their subtle darts thro' ev'ry pore,
 Ev'ry feat of life explore,
 And, mix'd with ev'ry vital flood,
 Arrest the putrid mafs of ling'ring blood,
 Thou call'st th' enfeebled crowd,
 The victims pale of glory or of gold,
 And bid'st the gales for them their wings unfold,
 Now, whisp'ring soft, now sweeping loud;
 And life, and vigour, from the ground,
 In crystal streamlets, gush around.

In bolder tides, from ev'ry part,
 The blood returns, to man the heart ;
 In stronger pulse, the daring breast,
 With high-born energy possest,
 Smit with sacred love of home,
 Throbs, again the waves to roam ;——
 Courting danger, scorning toil,
 Th' exulting train the billows sweep.
 The keel victorious ploughs the deep,
 And hail, with tears of joy, Britannia's happy soil.

Come, blessed pow'r, enlarge that infant's span ;
 An harrow'd bosom spare,
 And make my child thy care ;
 Like some pale rose bud, fading on the tree,
 Nipt by an envious worm,
 Or blasted by the storm,
 Behold him droop.—'Tis not for him I ask ;
 Self-love, thou may'st not wear affection's mask ;
 'Tis for myself ; for how can I resign
 The fond anticipation of the praise
 Attendant on his riper days,
 When it shall be my boast to call him mine ?——
 'Twixt present cherubim and future man,
 Hovers his trembling entity ;
 Come, with a portion of thy flame,
 To nerve his limbs and actuate his frame ;

And bid th' expansive angel, now confin'd
 Within his little form and mind,
 To weakness, varied wants, unvaried pain,
 Put forth his vigour, and the heights obtain,
 Of genius and of worth, that palms eternal gain.——
 The hopeful dawn unfolds a ray,
 Prophetic of the shining day ;
 Mature benevolence informs his smile,
 And manly meaning lightens from his eye.
 No feature his, to low'r with hate and guile,
 To smile in treachery, or look a lie.——
 Oh spare my child, that fond parental love
 May see what nature bade the darling prove.
 Hope, hope, what art thou ? Oh for ever fled,——
 My beauteous child is dead.*

* This last stanza was added after the death of John Emilius Preston,
 the author's son, a hopeful infant, who died at the age of three years.

S P E E C H,

OF AN

OLD SAVAGE TO HIS SON:

WHO, IN A WAR WITH A NEIGHBOURING TRIBE, WAS PREPARING
TO BEAR HIS FEEBLE FATHER ON HIS BACK.

NO more, my son ; thy pious care is vain.
Bow not thy back, with age's useless weight.
I am not worth preserving : wouldst thou wish me
To drag about a loathed crazy mass,
A vile memento of strength's frailty,

Cumb'rous to others, grievous to myself,
 And die of old-age, like a dog or christian?—
 Thou wert not form'd, to bear a weak old man.
 Our god thy limbs with active vigour brac'd,
 To range the forest and o'ertake the foe;
 Sinew'd thine arm, to speed the lance of death,
 Bend the tough bow, and cleave the flying crest!—
 Thus did thy father, in his day of strength;—
 And thou, my son, be just unto my fame;—
 Be brave, and praise thy father in thy deeds;
 That distant tribes may sing thy praise, and say,
 "His father sure was brave, and fed his son
 "With blood of conquer'd foes;"—and so I did;
 When, streaming warm, it dy'd thy little lips,
 And thou didst, grimly smiling, give a promise
 Of manly fierceness.—But if thou be weak,
 "His father taught him," will they say, "to lie,
 "Stretch'd in the sun, and drink the christian's liquor,
 "That makes a man a beast!"—But, hark, my son!
 The foe's at hand,—begone,—thy brethren call thee
 Forth, to the fight of justice, tarry not;—
 Rush to the battle, and preserve thine infants;
 That one day they may fight, and deck their belts
 With the usurping christian's scalp, and train
 Their children's children, to the cry of battle!
 But first strike here; leave not thine aged father,
 To feel their rage, whose kindred he has mangled;

Nor let his tortur'd members feast the sight
 Of those that hate him and his tribe !—Farewell,
 Be kind and quick.—Thy lance be sharp as now,
 Thine arm as strong, my son, in all thy warfare !



Small Sculpt

OFFA AND ETHELBERT

OR, THE

SAXON PRINCES,

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ARGUMENT.

OFFA king of Mercia, was a prince, who had some great qualities; he made many additions to his dominions, by force of arms; and increased them still further, by an act of the most horrid treachery and cruelty, towards the end of his reign. Though the kings of the East-Angles, who had never been powerful, had long been in a state of dependence, on the mercian monarchs; yet, they still continued to enjoy the title, and many of the prerogatives of royalty. Ethelbert, who at this time, governed that small state, was a young prince of the most amiable person and character, beloved by his subjects and esteemed by all the world. By the advice of his council, he made proposals of marriage to Elfrida, daughter of Offa, which were favourably received, and he was invited to the court of Mercia, which was then kept at Hereford, with all his retinue, to conclude the match. When he arrived there, attended by the chief nobility of his kingdom, he was received with every appearance of joy and respect. Amidst the festivity of the entertainments which took place, on this occasion, he was basely murdered, by command of Offa: and, tho' Elfrida, who abhorred her father's treachery, had time to give warning to the east-anglian nobility, who escaped into their own country, Offa, having extinguished the royal family, succeeded in his project of subduing that country; but did not long survive the victim of his ambition.—This treacherous prince, desirous of re-establishing his character in the world, and perhaps of appeasing the remorse of his own conscience, paid great court to the clergy, and practised all the monkish devotions, which were so much esteemed in that ignorant and superstitious age. He gave the tenth of his goods to the church; bestowed rich donations on the cathedral of Hereford; and even undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, where his great power and riches could not fail of procuring him the papal absolution. Such is the outline of this tragedy given by our historians; from which I have only varied in adding the two characters of Sigebert, and Justus, and supposing that Ethelbert fled, and was killed in his flight by command of Offa; and that Elfrida accompanied him; for the personage of Bertha, and her fatal passion for Ethelbert, are not wholly without historical foundation. See the first volume of Hume's England.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

OFFA, King of Mercia.

ETHELBERT, King of East-Anglia.

ARDULF, Friend to Ethelbert.

SIGEBERT, Minister to Offa.

ELLA, an Officer in Offa's army.

JUSTUS, a Religious.

EBBA, an Officer in the army of Ethelbert.

MESSENGER,

PRIESTS, CHORISTERS, GUARDS, and ATTENDANTS.

WOMEN.

BERTHA, Wife to Offa.

ELFRIDA, Daughter to Offa.

ALWINA, } Virgins attendants on Bertha
EDEURGA, } and Elfrida.

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ACT I. SCENE I.

A sequestered grove.

ETHELBERT, ELFRIDA, ALWINA *at a small distance.*

ETHELBERT

ALL hail, beloved shades, how my soul clings
Round ev'ry plant, that this deep gloom embrowns.
Here first I breath'd the sighs of love; and here,
My sweet Elfrida, with an angel blush,
And downward eyes, confest her soft regards
For happy Ethelbert.—Ye stars of night,
Chaste moon, and thou bright messenger of dawn,
And thou great orb of day, bear witness all;

For ye have seen me tread the hallow'd ground
 With pious feet, and heard my pray'rs and vows,
 Bear witness to my truth.

Elf. Yes, Ethelbert,
 Heav'n and all nature witness to thy truth.
 The gales, that whisper, waft it to mine ears;
 The cheering sun imprints it on my heart,
 In beams of joy and gladness. All I see,
 And all I hear, a voice and language take,
 To tell me, thou art true. Yet have I mark'd,
 For jealous watchful are the eyes of love,
 Amidst a thousand dear and gracious proofs,
 And fond expressions of the mutual heart,
 A sudden gloom, like envious clouds, that rise
 To steal away the gladness of the morn,
 And stain with tears the florid cheek of May.
 Come, let me share thy grief.

Ethel. My best Elfrida,
 'Tis difficult, indeed, to hide the soul
 From love's all-seeing eye; and trust me, dearest,
 'Twere foreign to my wish, as to my pow'r,
 From thee to veil my thoughts. But wherefore mar
 The present good, or wound Elfrida's breast,
 With random doubt, or jealous discontent,
 Which the next moment may disperse? With thee,
 I would be pleasure all. The gloomy cares
 Are vanish'd at thy smile.

Elf. Away, you flatt'rer.

You love me not, prince Ethelbert, with care
Your heart is sick. Your tongue has now confess'd,
What oft your looks assur'd me ; yet Elfrida
Is deem'd unworthy.

Ethel. Hear the truth : thy father—

Elf. Can Offa, pattern of heroic worth,
Whose realm, whose court, whose heart are ever open
To foster rising virtue ; and whose deeds
Are ever squar'd and levell'd, by the rule
Of truth and honour, can he offer ought,
To stain a royal welcome ? Thou art here,
Choice of his heart and fav'rite of his hopes,
The destin'd husband of his darling child.
His word is plighted.

Ethel. Thou hast touch'd the wound,
That rankles in my bosom. True, his word
Is plighted, as thou say'st ; yet, why I know not,
With cruel art he dallies with my love,
And wrings with hope delay'd my sicken'd soul ;
Winds up desire to madness, and wears out
The strings of life.—When I would urge my claim,
His brow is clouded with a sudden gloom ;
He starts, and sighs, and in a tone severe—
“ Enough, prince Ethelbert, another hour
“ May suit this theme ? ”—Then calls me to the chase.

Elf. So fully blest, in what the moment yields,
To see thee and be near thee, thine Elfrida

Hath fought no more ; nor sent a wish beyond
The present hour, to seek for discontent,
In hope's illusive form.

Alw. Princess, retire.

I hear the steps of men beneath the sycamores,
That mix with hazel skirt the western path,
Where royal Offa for the chace is wont
The chiding hounds uncouple.

Elf. Break we off.

At dawn to-morrow, if thy steps should tread
These precincts, we may meet.

Ethel. My heart goes with thee.

[*Exeunt Princess and Alwina.*]

S C E N E II.

ETHELBERT and ARDULF.

Ard. Will you not hunt, my lord ? your royal host
Demands your presence, and the sprightly steed
With nostrils wide snuffs the light air, and spurns
The sounding earth. The bowmen fit the nerve
To the tough yew, while with an hundred tongues,
Symphonious cry, the hounds salute the morn,
And echo from the craggy steeps, and woods,
And sloping lawns, and hollow glades around
Returns th' enliv'ning challenge.

Ethel. 'Tis in vain,

A listless weight on all my senses hangs
And sinks my weary spirit.

Ard. Let the chace,

And feast and minstrelsy, and love's delights,
Dispel the gloom. Forget thou art a king
Responsible to myriads, and to heav'n,
For delegated pow'r; and play the courtier,
The humble courtier, at a rival's board;
To share his pleasures, and to grace his train.

Ethel. My worthy Ardulf, venerable friend,

To whom a more, than filial love is due,
For cares beyond paternal, thy reproof
Hath pierc'd my heart; for well I know, that wisdom
Zealous for me, and, what is dearer far
To me than life, my glory, guides thy tongue.
Thy guardian cares, in orphan feebleness,
My childhood form'd; thy sword redeem'd my realm
From hostile inroad; what in arts or arms
Or manners I may boast, if ought I may,
Are due to thee.

Ard. Oppress not with applause

Unmerited thy servant. What I did
Was but a subject's duty, and fell short,
Fell infinitely short, of what I ow'd
Thy royal fire, who rais'd me from the dust.
If thou wilt praise me, let thy noble acts
Do justice to my precepts; that the world,

Applauding thee, may say, great Ethelbert
Perform'd in manhood, what he learn'd in youth,
From faithful Ardulf.

Ethel. Think not, good old man,
Thy lessons wasted; well I know the ties,
That bind me to my people. Well I know,
I live not for myself. I pant for fame,
And seek it only in a nation's welfare.
Yet, Ardulf, let thy soul, howe'er mature
In years and wisdom, to the days of youth
Revert, and somewhat sure thou wilt indulge
To heat of passion, which has ever seiz'd
The best and noblest minds.

Ard. Alas! my lord,
Nor danger to the state, so long bereft
Of royal cares, I mourn, nor for thy fame,
Though dear as life; but my presaging soul
Sinks, to behold thee thus within the grasp
Of Mercia's pow'r, whose kings, from sire to son,
Are Anglia's scourge and terror.

Ethel. Noble minds
Will shrink abhorrent from the traitor's arts.—
Would Offa, think'st thou, stain his royal robes
With blood of him, who on a monarch's faith
Bides at his court? Are not our mutual vows
Of friendship plighted? Have not solemn oaths
Combin'd our kingdoms, long to wars a prey,
In league of holy peace? And by the bond

Of dear connection to secure these ties,
 Hath he not giv'n to happy Ethelbert
 The daughter of his hopes?

Ard. But why delay,
 With studied art, your nuptials? Why consume
 In frivolous delights the lavish'd hours
 Which Offa well could husband, were he not,
 Rough as he seems, intent, by policy,
 To snare thy noble nature, and relax
 With pleasure's honey'd bane thy youthful mind?

Ethel. Could Offa be thus treach'rous?

Ard. Doubt it not;
 Thy potent voice, from Arwan's fertile banks,
 From stormy Humber, and the sea-beat shore,
 Might call the hardy bands, and pour them forth,
 To visit on the mercian plains the waste
 That Penda's* fury spread. He views thee, prince,
 As shepherds view the royal lion's whelp,
 And in his paws yet soft, and infant fangs
 Anticipate the ravage of the fold.
 Hence, with the nets of beauty, with the cords
 Of strong desire, the silken toils of love.
 He seeks to snare thy feet, to wrap thee round,
 And drag thee to the pit.

[Sound of hunters horns is heard at a distance.]

* Penda was a predecessor of Offa on the mercian throne. He was perpetually at war with the neighbouring states, and remarkable for his atrocious cruelty.

S C E N E III.

Enter BERTHA and EDBURGA.

Ber. Hear you not, prince,
How you are summon'd? With the merry horn,
Offa reproaches your delay. The stag
Is now unharbour'd.

Ethel. At a future hour *[Aside to Ardulf.]*
We will pursue this theme; for trust me, Ardulf,
The dark surmises of my secret thought
Too well accord, with what thy love has urg'd,
And prudent caution; were we longer absent *[to Bertha.]*
Offa would chide our sloth, else beauteous Bertha,
I would not fly thee.

Ber. Hasten to the chace;
And joy and pleasure go with Ethelbert.
[Exeunt Ethelbert and Ardulf.]

S C E N E IV.

BERTHA and EDBURGA.

Ber. The horn awakes the chace, and warlike Offa
Leads forth to sportive fields the gallant youth
Whom oft he led to combat. War has sheath'd
His cruel sword; and now the piercing cries
Of wretched dames, for sons or husbands torn
From their embrace are hush'd. The realm is calm,
And all things in it, save the tortur'd breast

Of Bertha; there conflicting passions wage
 Eternal warfare. Tell me, my Edburga,
 You saw the pageant pass, what youths with Offa
 Pursue the stag? Yet wherefore should I ask?
 Young Ethelbert is there; when he is present
 All other objects fade; all eyes and tongues
 And spirits dwell on him, and him alone.
 Thy looks, Edburga, speak a lively feeling,
 Thy words an apt and pregnant understanding;
 What is thy judgment, speak without disguise,
 Of princely Ethelbert!

Edb. My gracious mistress,
 It ill beseems a poor and lowly maiden,
 Whose thoughts should be all humble as her birth,
 To gaze on high, and with presumptuous glance
 Appreciate the merit of a king;
 Yet will I own, since you demand my thought,
 Were I a princess, or the king of Anglia
 An humble peasant swain, I were most happy.

Ber. Had I been born a peasant girl, no laws
 Had frown'd stern interdict on love.—Ah wretch,
 And traitress to thyself!—what guilty thoughts
 My bosom harbours, and my rebel tongue
 Would fain avow—Edburga, wonder not,
 To hear my lavish praise of Ethelbert.
 Think not I love him; heav'n forefend, that love
 Should teach a matron, from her plighted lord
 To wander, e'en in wish.—No, Bertha's soul

Impassive to the gust of vain desire
Retains her wedded vows.—May quick destruction
Gape to devour me, ere I stain the faith
To royal Offa giv'n; but gratitude—

Edb. I've heard, that gallant Ethelbert preserv'd
Your sacred life.

Ber. And truly hast thou heard.—
One morn; o still to cruel memory
That morn is present. Offa chac'd the stag.
King Ethelbert was there; I join'd the band.
At Offa's side I rode, and talk'd with Ethelbert;
Sweet flow'd his honey'd accents, and discourse
Beguil'd the moments, ere our sport began.—
'Twas where yon river through th' impending woods
Winds its uncertain way. Thou seest the tuft
Of gnarled oaks, that, sloping from the rock
Peer into the deep gulph, and overhang
The black'ning eddy.

Edb. There the bank abrupt
Seems shatter'd, by a rude convulsive shock
Of startling nature.

Ber. Then, a narrow path
Skirted the river's verge.—There pass'd the stag;
The hounds pursued.—I press'd my foaming steed,
Fir'd with a youthful ardour, which perhaps
My sex ill-suited, to the dang'rous pass.
The treach'rous soil gave way, and down I sunk.

Edb. Alas! for pity—by what saving pow'r?—

Ber. Thrice I emerg'd; thrice o'er my fated head
 Roar'd the devouring deep. Then, Ethelbert,
 His danger at the sight of mine forgotten, plung'd
 Into th' abyfs; the fourth time, as I rose,
 His left hand seiz'd my tresses, with his right
 He stem'd the flood, and bore me to the land.—
 Oh better I had perish'd!

Edb. Gracious heav'n!
 Who then is happy? Sure, the circling hours
 Waft blessings to thee, on their golden plumes,
 And hover round thy head, with fond delay,
 To pour down treasur'd joys. The mighty heart
 Of Mercia's king, wife, brave, munificent,
 As teeming autumn, beats for thee alone,
 Preventing all thy wishes.

Ber. Yet Edburga,
 There's not a wretch, that crawls this burthen'd earth,
 A slave, whose tears bedew the land he tills,
 From an harsh lord to gain the bitter morsel,
 That lengthens out his course of pain and bondage,
 Would change estates with me, could they but read
 The secrets of my heart; some monstrous doom,
 Awaits me sure;—would I had ne'er been born!

Edb. For heav'n's dear sake, recall your wand'ring thoughts,
 Your eyes are bent on vacancy, a wildness,
 A fearful wildness, o'er your visage reigns.—

Ber. Would I had lain expos'd amidst the wild,
 In helpless infancy; or on the beach

Dash'd with the toiling surge, a mangled corse.
 Or vultures to their aery, welcome banquet,
 Borne me to feast their young.

Edb. Restrain yourself.

Alas! we are discover'd; hasty steps
 Sound o'er that winding path, and now mine eye,
 Through the scant op'ning of the beechen grove,
 Perceives a man approach,—'tis Ethelbert.

Ber. So soon return'd!—but I divine the cause.—
 The lov'd Elfrida.—Leave me, good Edburga—
 Our royal guest may seek for private converse,
 On points that much import him; and thy presence
 Were a restraint. Thou know'st the little grotto
 Beside the bank of violets, and the willows
 That bathe their golden tresses in the stream,
 Where Emma, victim of disastrous love,
 Plung'd desp'rate in the flood; there, wait my coming.

[*Exit.* Edburga.]

S C E N E V.

ETHELBERT and BERTHA.

Ber. O guilty love, in form of gratitude, [aside
 How hast thou crept! I nurs'd thee in my bosom,
 Thou serpent, pleas'd to see the spiry volumes

Of verdant gold, but soon thy fatal sting
 Destroy'd my peace; thy venom fill'd my heart.—
 Erewhile the chace for Ethelbert had charms;
 And oft detain'd him, till the sun, repos'd
 On crimson beds behind the hills, had warn'd
 To feast and minstrelsy.—This day my lord
 Appointed for the field, from early dawn
 'Till vesper bell should call the holy beadmen
 To chaunt their orisons.

Ethel. Along the hills
 That lift their green shorn ridges o'er these woods,
 Your lord pursues the stag, with such an ardour,
 As marks our first enjoyments. He is happy,
 Victorious, prosp'rous; all his wishes crown'd
 By heav'n, with lavish hand.—The man, whose hopes
 Hang all in jeopardy, but ill conforms
 With pleasure's jocund sons; the chace to him
 Is dull and tiresome, and the banquet palls.

Ber. Had I the pow'r of Providence, at will
 To lavish blessings; Ethelbert were happy.
 Oh never shall my grateful heart forego
 The gallant deed that call'd me back to life.
 'Tis ev'n oppressive to my soul, that feels
 How poor I am in thanks, how void of means,
 To pay the mighty debt of gratitude.

Ethel. Thanks were reproaches, lady; I should scorn
 My nature, could I look for recompense—
 A voice within this breast had bade me venture,

Ev'n as I did for thee, to save from death
The poorest peasant ;——yet the means are thine
Would overpay ten thousand fold.

Ber. Oh ! speak,
That eager gratitude may fly to serve thee. —
Like guardian spirits would I wait thy call ;
All eye, all ear, all quick intelligence,
To see, to hear, and execute thy will.

Ethel. More than my tutelary saint or angel,
This hour thou couldst befriend me.

Ber. Say, what boon
Can Ethelbert demand, and I withhold ?

Ethel. A truant to the cares of royalty,
And all the duties, that my faithful subjects
May justly claim ; I linger here, the slave
Of am'rous hope and trembling expectation. —
Why these averted looks ? eyes bent on earth ?
Why heaves thy breast ?

Ber. 'Twas but a transient pang
Shot through my bosom. I am often thus. ——

Ethel. I know thou can'st, with softly potent sway,
Demanding nought, yet all obtaining, bend
Stern as it is the mind of royal Offa ;
And were thine influence employ'd, at hours
Of kind compliance, when the expanded heart
Ev'n to its sanctuary access yields,
To urge the claims, that from my realm an alien
Have bade me count twice ten revolving moons,

A sojourner with Offa ; then Elfrida,
 Already mine, by Mercia's plighted faith,
 Were mine by nuptial rites.—No more her fire,
 Whose eyes are still unsatisfied with gazing
 On her fresh opening beauties, would withhold her
 From my warm prayers.—

Ber. He ever will withhold ;
 And ever shall ; if Bertha's cries and tears,
 And bended knees have pow'r. Was it for this ?—
 Oh I am mad !—To pander for your love—
 To mediate nuptial leagues, and send the daughter
 Of warlike Offa, whose victorious name
 Bears terror through this isle, from wealthy Mercia,
 The proudest of our Saxon states, to share
 Within thine humble Anglia's narrow bounds,
 And little court, a queen in miniature ?

Ethel. Heav'ns ! what sin of mine
 Hath rous'd thine hatred ?—

Ber. Sayst thou, Ethelbert,
 My hatred ?—Hate thee,—couldst thou read my heart !
 Oh could its thoughts and feelings with the current
 Of vital blood reveal'd and sensible
 Before thee flow, this hand should aim the ponyard,
 And warm expression gush in purple tides !

Ethel. If ever Ethelbert in Bertha's eyes,
 By wish, or word, or fond observant act,
 Hath favour found ; if e'er that gentle heart,

As sure it has, confess the pow'r of love ;
Learn from thyself to feel for Ethelbert.

Ber. The pow'r of love !—to feel for Ethelbert !—
Feel what ?—Perdition—whither am I driv'n ?
One step—and I am hurry'd down the abyfs.
Feel—feel—I feel too much.—O Ethelbert.
Farewell, farewell.

Ethel. O fly me not in anger.
O stay and blefs me. Tell me, that Elfrida,
The guerdon of my long and faithful love !
The wish, the promis'd blessing of my life,
Shall yet be mine.

Ber. No—sooner let destruction
Come sweeping on us all. Elfrida thine !—
Oh never, never.—Hence ; avoid my sight ;
Thy looks are poison to me.

Ethel.—Gracious heav'n !
I stand confounded.—I conjure thee, speak.
What means this storm of passion ? Why shrink back,
As from some hateful and accursed thing
That threatens life ?

Ber. And wherefore art thou good,
Wife, brave, and gentle ? Why art thou adorn'd
With ev'ry grace, to win the coldest heart ?
These are thy sins. Heavy, indeed, they are.
They have destroy'd my peace.

Ethel. Destroy'd thy peace ?
What fatal myst'ry lurks beneath thy speech ?

I view thee, with such reverential awe,
As suits a parent's wife.

Ber. Cold-blooded prince!

A parent's wife—and reverential awe—
Can reverence suit with love?— A love like mine.

Ethel. Like thine!—for whom? Thy strange mysterious word,
Fill me with doubt and wonder.

Ber. May'st thou doubt,
And wonder ever. May the shades of night
Conceal it. Never may the tell-tale breeze
Whisper it in the desert. From myself
I fain would hide it. But through shade and silence,
To me too palpable, it glares, it sounds
For ever, ever present. In the grave,
When earth shall cover me, with Bertha rest,
Thou nameless monster of abortive thought.

*[Here, in her agitation, she drops the picture of Ethelbert from
her bosom; he takes it up. She shrieks and endeavours to
wrest it from him.]*

Ethel. Ha! what is here?—My form and lineaments
Find place in Bertha's bosom.

Ber. 'Tis betray'd—
The guilty secret.—To dissemble now
Were unavailing. Hear then, Ethelbert,
A secret, which I thought no pow'r of torture,
Keen harrowing up my flesh, had ever taught
This tongue to utter, that the heart of Bertha
More than the light, and air, and hopes of heav'n,

Loves thee. Thou art its spring, its vital heat.—
 On ev'ry pow'r and function of my soul
 The wasting flame has prey'd; nine weary moons
 Have view'd my shame and sorrows.

Ethel. Do I awake?

Can Mercia's queen, the pride of saxon dames—
 Sure, some illusive demon mocks my sense,
 With sounds dissembled.

Ber. Hear me, king of Anglia;—
 The bonds are rent, that fetter'd my resolves,
 Reserve, and fear, and female decency.—
 Where shall the spirit stay, that once hath dar'd
 An outrage on our sex's pride, a shipwreck
 Of all we dearly prize; a bold avowal
 Of love illicit?—By those scalding tears,
 That flow, like molten lead, and scorch me up,
 I would not hurt thee; but my furious soul
 Stung with despair, and scorn, and self-reproach,
 May commune with the fiends, and call them round,
 To bathe in blood, and lay a scene of horror
 That both our realms shall mourn to latest time.

[*Exeunt.*

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ACT II. SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace of Offa.

BERTHA, alone.

WRETCH that I am ! ensnar'd in passion's toil.
 Desires illicit winding round my heart,
 Up-rear their dragon crests ; hiss in mine ears ;
 And sting my soul to death. Remorse and shame
 Cling to me, like a vestment dipt in venom,
 Consume my flesh, thrill anguish through my frame,
 And taint the vital flood. Ye saints of grace,
 Angels of mercy, lend me force to break
 The dire enchantment.—Ethelbert—Elfrida.—
 It may not be.—Those names together sounded
 Are an accursed spell, that conjures up
 The blackest forms of mischief. Never, never,
 By name, or hand, or nuptial rite, Elfrida
 With Ethelbert shall join. That fatal hour
 Heav'n witnesses to my vow, for Bertha dead
 Leads forth the fun'ral pomp. But how avert

The blow? Those arts, which long delay'd it, fail.
 Fond of his daughter as he is, and bound
 By ties of plighted faith, my lord must yield.
 Ha!—to my wish this crafty states-man comes
 Most opportune.—O welcome Sigebert.

S C E N E II.

Enter SIGEBERT.

Not less thy years mature in sage experience
 Advance our mercian weal, by peaceful arts,
 Than conqu'ring Offa by the blood-stain'd sword.

Sige. My royal mistress, ill this partial praise
 Suits a despis'd old man. There was a time,
 When Offa yet was new to cares of state
 And found his sceptre heavy; then, the voice
 Of Sigebert had pow'r. 'Tis feeble now,
 'Midst noise of youthful spirits, who confiding
 In what alone they understand, the sword,
 Would send the man of peace, with droning monks,
 O'er books and beads to wear his life in cloisters.
 Yet haply 'twere not ill for Mercia's peace,
 Might this poor voice be heard.

Ber. In dear rememb'rance
 Of grateful thought, my lord retains the time,

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When, by thine influence led, th' assembled chiefs
 Of Mercia's wide dominion hail'd him king,
 As yet a youth; ere his victorious arm
 Tore from th' usurper's brow, the diadem.
 Yet now, the sov'reign of a rival state,
 A jealous spy, and ancient enemy,
 Can bias him, with more prevailing sway,
 Than those, who form'd and led his early years,
 Thro' paths of glory to this height of pow'r.

Sige. That smooth and beardless king, with flowing hair
 And glozing speeches comely as his form,
 Hath won his heart.—Why, he will sit all night,
 To hear him touch the harp, and sing soft songs
 Of love and dalliance. He that had no joy,
 Save in the thought of war, and godlike dreams
 Of added empire, wears day after day
 In chace and frivolous delights, to please
 His guest; as tho' he would become, like him,
 A stripling monarch.

Ber. Say, good Sigebert,
 How deems thy wisdom of the nuptial league,
 So soon to be complete?

Sige. As of an act,
 That, with a spendthrift wantonness, repels
 Good fortune from our doors. The present hour
 Offers, what, never shall a future bring,
 To Mercia wealth, pow'r, and security.

Ev'n now to Humber, and the northern main,
Might Offa stretch his sceptre.

Ber. Well and justly

Hast thou conceiv'd, what Mercia's weal demands.
Shall Offa, greatest monarch of this isle,
Bestow the darling of his hopes and cares
On the poor sov'reign of a petty state,
Which only holds a kingdom's founding name,
By his forbearance?

Sige. Why should Anglia lean,

On Mercia, as a prop, when wiser counsels
Might turn her weakness to our strength? Subjected
To Mercia, she would yield, not crave support;
And prove best feather in her eagle wing
For conquest imp'd.—Why feed the hungry foil
Of Anglia with our fatness, and engraft
On the firm trunk of the majestic oak
That shades the plain, and yields to beast and trav'ler
Shelter and food; an unproductive bramble?

Ber. 'Tis yours alone from such disgrace to save
Your native land. And should your happy arts
And influence o'er the king avert the blow—
What praise, good Sigebert, were yours?

Sige. The task, the praise be thine; for who, like thee,
Can Offa's spirit temper?—Since the day
Thy dazzling beauties from the gloomy thought
Of Emma dead, and stern ambition's care,
Recall'd him first to tread the flow'ry paths

Of love and pleasure.—Genius of his soul
 Enthron'd supreme ; thy hand can minister
 It's elements and seasons ; bid them swell
 To vex the land with storm, or sooth them down,
 In melting calm, and fost'ring influence.

Ber. True, I may something boast ;—yet, far too highly
 You rate my pow'r ; for with contending sway,
 My rival in his heart, Elfrida's craft
 Will with insidious tears th' impressions mar
 That I have labour'd. Thus, with silent lapse,
 The stealing waters from the flinty rock
 Efface the graver's toil.

Sig. Oh doubt not thou
 My zealous efforts ; and if I retain
 Pow'r with my lord, the next autumnal sun
 That shine on Anglia shall embrown her harvests
 For Offa, and their reapers hail him king.

Ber. Behold, my lord approaches.—On his brow
 Care is imprinted, and his whole demeanour
 Marks the fierce conflict of contending passions
 That rend the wav'ring mind. I will retire,
 But thou the subject of our present converse
 Urge home with timely suit, and heav'n to speed.

[*Exit. Bertha.*]

S C E N E III.

OFFA and SIGEBERT.

OFFA, aside.

Delusive phantom of o'erweening pow'r,
 What art thou? Canst thou fill the boundless wish?—
 I feel thou can'st not; for each new possession
 Serves but to goad me, with increase of appetite,
 To seek extended empire. What is fame?
 What is this unseen blessing which bids kings
 Defile their hands with blood, and wear their days
 In care and tumult? 'Tis the giddy shout
 Of worthless multitudes, or venal song
 Of minstrel, chanted at the revel board.
 What is the wish, which my recoiling mind
 Scarce to herself confides, which like a viper,
 Half peering from it's dark retreat, starts back,
 As of the gaze impatient? Night by night,
 With thoughts envenom'd my repose to sting,
 It lurks beneath my pillow. The hour is come.—
 I must decide, for with a lover's ardour,
 Which may not be delay'd, young Ethelbert
 Demands completion of our royal word.—

Shall I then stain with guileless blood the laurels
 So dearly purchas'd ? and forego the praise,
 From virtuous deeds redounding, which survives
 In good mens hearts, and like the precious incense
 On god's high altar laid, ascends to heav'n ?

Seeing Sigebert.

Oh save me, Sigebert ; thou com'st in time,
 'To save me from myself. Ne'er did my soul
 So need thy counsels.

Sige. Wherefore should I speak ?

Alas, my lord, there was a time, when Sigebert
 Might speak, with confidence ; but well he knows
 That age which weighs his body to the dust
 Hath humbled his repute ; and should his counsel
 Be now requir'd, 'tis but to sooth his pride,
 An old man's pride, in gratitude perhaps
 For service past.

Offa. In proof how much I prize
 Thy counsels, hear, what pride would fain conceal ;
 Thy master's mind, which never with design,
 From virtue swerv'd before, now fluctuates
 'Twixt good and ill, and entertains a doubt
 If faith should bind a monarch.

Sige. And a king
 May sometimes, justly, entertain a doubt
 If faith should bind him, when the strict observance
 Would contravene the welfare of his state.

Offa. Have I then publish'd laws, and taught my subjects
 To know and venerate the sacred bounds,
 Of right and wrong, and led the fiery spirits,
 Nurs'd in the camp, and train'd in acts of outrage,
 To cherish decent order, and perform
 The offices from man to his brother due?
 And shall I be the first, to break the ties,
 I have myself ordain'd, and stand th' example
 Of wolfish violence, or serpent fraud?

Sige. As, in his station, from the private subject
 The monarch differs; he must likewise vary
 His rules of life. His virtues, and his wisdom,
 Are diff'rent far, from what, the names import,
 In meaner men, since he for others lives,
 Not for himself, and what, in private life,
 Where heinous crime, in sov'reigns may become,
 Sanction'd by public weal, a virtuous deed.
 I speak with boldness, since my gracious lord
 Gives scope and license to his servant's tongue.
 Would you the rankling thorn, which fair occasion
 Bids pluck from Mercia's side, implant for ever
 Bane of her peace and safety?

Offa. Sigebert,
 Thy voice hath rous'd a thought, which I had task'd
 My force to smother. To the shores of ocean
 Anglia possess'd would stretch the bounds of Mercia.
 But Ethelbert is valiant, brave and wise,
 And never, but with life will he resign

His lineal sceptre. In my dreams ambition,
 A giant spectre clad in panoply,
 Stands at my couch, and with his brandish'd spear
 Dazzles my sight. His mouth a subtle flame
 Exhales, that fills my bosom. To my hand
 Methinks he gives a chalice; with the blood
 Of Ethelbert tis fill'd; he bids me quaff it;
 Then shrieks, in sounds, which on my waking ear
 Vibrate, "remember he is in thy pow'r."

Sig. The public mind from Offa's fame demands
 A race of glory. Well hast thou begun;
 But much remains;—beneath one common head,
 To join the Saxon pow'rs, discordant parts
 Each weak'ning other of one feeble mass.
 In lasting sleep the sword shall rest; and peace
 Clothe all our hills with verdure; and our ships
 Shall cross the deep, to seek on distant shores
 New arts and comforts. Late posterity
 Shall say—'twas Offa made the sons of England
 Renown'd and happy.

Offa. Vainly, shall my cares
 Wake for the peace of Mercia, while from Anglia,
 With northern pirates leagu'd, the hungry borderers
 Pour like a deluge on our fertile plains.
 In vain, my pow'r hath to his mountain holds
 Repell'd the cambrian, as his native stream,

Fierce and impetuous. In vain, my rampart *
 Rears his majestic length, to curb the foe,
 From the wide outlet of the winding Dee,
 To where the Wey, with founding torrent, joins
 The Severn's mighty march.

Sige. Those aged knees
 I bend, which never bow'd before to man.
 Not for myself I pray, my fad of life
 Hath little space to run, and only seeks
 Leisure and grace, to call my sins of youth,
 To solemn audit, for thy future fame,
 And for thy subjects, and their childrens children,
 For whom the present hour to latest time
 May peace and wealth secure, with supplications
 Humble, as men should to the deity
 Prefer, I kneel.

Offa. Arise; for good or ill
 Thy voice decides the conflict, call Elfrida.

[*Exit* Sigebert,

I must possess my daughter of our purpose.
 Her young affections are on Ethelbert
 So fix'd and rivetted, that it will need
 A parent's whole authority, combin'd
 With softest blandishment and fond persuasion,
 To mold her will obedient to my wish.

* Alluding to the dike and mound of Offa.

S C E N E IV.

SIGEBERT *returns with* ELFRIDA

Elf. I learn from venerable Sigebert
My father seeks my presence ; and have hasted
To know his honour'd will.

Offa. Attend, my child.
Thou still hast been obedient to my wish,
And, well thou know'st, with fond solicitude
I have prevented thine. The hour is come,
If an indulgent father's tenderness
May challenge a return, to show thy mind
Nor heedless, nor ungrateful to his love.

Elf. Why should my father thus, with circumstance,
And hint imperfect, half reveal his will,
And half withhold ; as doubtful of my duty ?
Heav'n knows this heart, my daily orisons
Have been, in thought and deed, to please my father.

Offa. Well, I will prove thee then. Canst thou resign
The wish most inward to thy heart, which hope
Hath, like a child, it's mother's pride and toy,
Nourish'd with amorous thoughts, and images

Of fond delight ? I know the sacrifice
 Most painful ; well I see th' impassion'd storm.
 'Tis, as I should command thee pierce thy heart ;
 Or tear the precious apple from an eye.
 But what were duty, what in sight of heav'n,
 The palm of virtue, were it's practice easy ?—
 You start and tremble.

Elf. Oh ! my dearest father.

You taught me first to look on Ethelbert,
 As on my future lord. My heart is his
 More than my own ; but 'twas my father's boon
 Not mine ; and now, it may not be recall'd.
 Part of my being, with my heart strings 'twin'd
 Is the strong tie, that binds me to his fate.
 Like a young plant, my love for Anglia's king
 Hath grown beneath your hand ; you saw it rise,
 And daily water'd it, with lavish praise
 Of his endowments. Would you root it up,
 And cast it forth, now, in the blooming promise
 Of fair and golden fruit ? This fatal change
 Your words import.

Offa. Now answer me, Elfrida,
 Meet were it, that the father to the child
 Should render strict account, of all the motives,
 That actuate his will ? Suffice to say ;
 Dear as my life I prize thy happiness.
 But reasons cogent founded in the weal

III

Of Mercia's state, and prudent policy,
Demand this sacrifice.

Sig. Yes, beauteous maid,
Most nearly it concerns the good of myriads
Present and future, that the high-born daughter
Of Mercia should reject the proffer'd nuptials
Of Anglia's monarch. Maidens, in their songs
Thy praises shall rehearse; and learn'd historians,
Amongst illustrious dames that sav'd their country,
Record Elfrida.

Elf. Why is this? What monster
For light too hideous lurks in mystery?
Why am I thus beset? Upon my knees,
O lov'd, rever'd, dear author of my being,
To thee I fall. Behold my streaming tears;
Spurn me not from thee; by the faintest shade
Of my departed mother. By the charge,
Giv'n with her last embraces, when she join'd
Our hands in hers, then, cold and damp with death,
And said—"Be kind to this, the first-born pledge
"Of our chaste loves."—If e'er my natal hour
With joy suffus'd thy cheek; or on thy heart
Paternal transport rush'd, as from the fight
Return'd and red with wounds, to thee I ran,
And clung around thy knees all cas'd in mail.
Then in thine arms tir'd from the work of death,
Stooping you caught me, and in tender passion
Strain'd to your bosom, whence the blood of foes,

Flow'd undistinguish'd from your own, and painted
With crimson streaks your cuirass.

Offa. Rise, my daughter,
I cannot hear thee plead, and may not grant
Remission of my purpose; well thou know'st
Thy sorrows rend my heart; yet were I weak,
And all unworthy of the crown I wear,
Should ev'n my tenderness to thee, whose grief
I would most gladly with my own redeem,
Retard me from pursuit of Mercia's weal.

Elf. Ere yet I rise, o hear all righteous heav'n,
The solemn vow breath'd from a virgin's lips,
Which in due orison, both ev'n and morn,
Have fought the throne of grace; if I must yield
My lord betroth'd, the husband of my choice,
To that authority, which never yet
I dar'd to question; then, the spouse of God,
From this delusive world will I retire
A cloister'd votary, and in humble weeds
To bid my beads, and chant the solemn rites,
And pray, that thou, and Ethelbert may live
Prosperous and happy; or a requiem sing
To souls of slaughter'd wretches, who have fall'n
In fields embattled, victims of the pride
And avarice of kings. These little charms
Fasting and vigils shall consume, these robes
And tinsel ornaments to sackcloth change.

Offa.
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Offa.
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Offa. Oh rise, my daughter: sure, a spirit of heav'n,
Speaks thro' thine organs, for mine alter'd soul
Now loaths, as sinful, what it late pursued,
As wife and laudable. Ye pow'rs of grace,
Be ever blest; that, in due time, recall'd
My wandering feet, ere yet the fatal meshes
Of error's net had snar'd them past redemption.

Sige. What then is man! and what are his resolves? [*aside.*
A feather tost by ev'ry vagrant gale.
Thus fades the air-built pile of Mercia's greatness,
Puff'd into nothing, by a puling maiden,
With a few love sick sighs,—what I had labour'd,
For years, to raise.—Yet will I not despair;
Ambition has relax'd, not yielded whole,
Her powers on *Offa's* mind. I will essay him,
And find occasion apt—when glorious pride
And prudence shall, in reason's balance, weigh
A kingdom's value, with a woman's tear.

[*Exit Sigebert.*

S C E N E V.

OFFA, ETHELBERT, and ELFRIDA,

Offa. Oh king of Anglia, timely art thou come.
Here, gallant Ethelbert, receive my daughter,

A present worthy of a king to give,
 And king to take. Reach me thy hand, Elfrida;
 Long hath this plighted hand been thine, by promise;
 Now 'tis thine own, indeed.—May bounteous heav'n
 With blessings crown your union.—As the bond
 Of marriage makes you one, so may the ties
 Of holy peace and nuptial amity
 Unite our kingdoms to the latest time.

Ethel. My bosom labours, with it's mighty freight
 Of wild tumultuous joy. A blissful faintness
 Shuts up my senses, stops my failing breath,
 Dazzles my sight, and tingles in mine ears.—
 Elfrida mine!—Hear it, thou ambient air,
 And waft it to the skies; that cherubim
 May catch the sound, and join in choral warblings!
 Elfrida mine! Behold it, ye chaste stars,
 And shed your happiest influence; urge your spheres,
 With swifter pace, to roll their cycles on,
 And bring the blissful hour. My gratitude
 For speech too mighty, shall be shown in deeds.

Elf. If, Ethelbert, my tongue, by secret fear,
 And maiden shame restrain'd, hath hitherto
 Been silent; deem not thence Elfrida's love
 Less warm, or transport, at this blest event.—
 My lord, my father,—now, thou hast, indeed,
 Approv'd thyself a father, gentle, kind,
 As thou wert ever; and a second time

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Being on me confer'd ; for while I live
This frail existence hangs on Ethelbert.

Offa. What transport fills my bosom !—Full contentment,
How sweet thy smiles, thou child of rectitude.
As, to her handmaid elm, the wedded vine
Clings and unites, may thou to Ethelbert !
The pious Egbert, who from Litchfield sways,
With hollow'd crozier, Mercia's church, to-morrow,
With pray'rs devout and tuneful psalmody
Of nuptial hymn, shall bless your mutual vows.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

An Hall, in the Palace of OFFA.

Enter BERTHA and SIGEBERT.

BERTHA.

WONDROUS old man ! sure wisdom in thy breast,
Bides ever, and persuasion on thy lips ;
This happy change is thine.—Vain hopes of man,
And transitory joys ! —Ev'n now the minstrels

Explore the harp prelusive; and rehearse
The nuptial song;—the bridal bow'r is deck'd;
And fond Elfrida moves, in regal trim,
To meet her Ethelbert.

Sig. Prophetic thought

Forefaw, that Offa would not thus resign
The hopes and projects, that have fill'd his soul,
For twice ten years, with Anglia's sea-beat shores,
To gird around, as with a coat of mail,
The fertile plains of Mercia.—He would join
Warrior and monk, the bigot and the statesman.
O wild attempt!—His soul was ne'er design'd
To mope in superstition's bonds; 'twas form'd
To feel ambition's charms, to win the palm
Of deep-wrought policy, and stretch his views
Thro' the gross cloud of ignorance that bounds
The ken of our rude times.—Before his eyes,
I set the fatal prodigality
Of present fame to him, and future good
To those he sways, by nuptial ties induc'd,
With Anglia's king; the mercian crown transfer'd
Which he had rais'd to such illustrious height,
Shorn of it's glories to a foreign lord.

Ber. But will he not relent, and yield his soul,
Once more, a captive, to the foolish bonds,
Forg'd by his dotage, and Elfrida's arts?—

Sig. It may not be; Elfrida's influence
Will want both space and time, to work a change.

Ev'n now the crisis comes ; and thou shalt hear
His awful voice, with solemn interdict,
Divorce these lovers.

Ber. Quickly may I hear
The blessed, blessed, sounds !—O they will breathe
The sweetest music to my gloomy soul.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E II.

*The scene opens, and discloses to the view, a magnificent Chapel,
of antique structure, adorned as for a marriage ceremony.—
Ethelbert and Elfrida, with their attendants, priests, and
choristers.—A nuptial song is performed.*

NUPTIAL SONG.

COME, smiling peace, and piety, and truth,
For ever blooming in eternal youth ;
Awhile forsake your lov'd abode ;
Whether, from hermit's cell,
With pray'r,
Your sister, bright and fair,
In tuneful hymns, ye seek the throne of god ;
Or, not less pure,
From giant crimes secure,

The fields, and homestead of the happy swain,
 The grove, and sloping mead,
 With paths delighted softly tread ;
 Soon, ye sweet strangers, come, and long remain ;
 And deign with kings in courtly bow'rs to dwell,

To bless the rites, oh come, ye hallow'd band ;
 And on this gentle pair, with bounteous hand,
 Your bright and sacred treasures pour,
 Richer than orient gold,
 Or gems,
 Or royal diadems,
 The virtuous thought and self-applauding hour,
 Complete and whole,
 According unison of soul.
 Let waving plenty crown their peasant's toil.
 Oh banish from their age
 Famine, and fear, and hostile rage.
 Let heav'n with eyes benign regard the soil,
 And bid their children's sons the sceptre hold.

[After the nuptial song, Offa enters in great seeming agitation.]

OFFA, *aside*.

Oh beauteous scene of peace ; ambition down ;
 Why wilt thou warp my spirit ? Let me tread
 The blessed paths of virtue, and partake
 These children's happiness. Oh then relent —

Wilt thou, with impious hands, thou savage man,
 Rend the predestin'd ties, which heav'n has knit?
 Wilt thou, o'er this fair prospect, like a fiend,
 Sail wrapt in storm, and blight, and pestilence?
 To mar it all, and turn the notes of joy,
 Which cherubim might share, to groans of anguish.—
 Oh Sigebert, oh Bertha, your suggestions
 Have sunk too deep. Resistless influence,
 The pow'rs malign predominate. In vain
 My heart recoils. What fate decrees must come.

[He advances from the side scene to the front of the stage.]

Break off the rites, reserve the nuptial vow,
 For happier hour, and omens. Now, the stars,
 With aspect red, frown on our work. Elfrida,
 Retire. You marvel, prince; but know, that causes
 Most urgent, and such high authority
 As I may not gainsay, demand this change.

Ethel. Is this then Offa's faith?—Know, king of Mercia,
 In sight of heav'n, I hold Elfrida mine;
 And never, but with life, will I resign
 The dear possession. No, this little arm,
 In such a cause, will hurl the thunder's force
 Against opposing breasts, and guard my claim,
 Tho' thousands stood array'd, in phalanx firm,
 Thy creatures. Think not, tho' thy realm outweighs
 In strength my Anglia, this most cruel wrong.

Shall unreveng'd be borne. Rage will supply
What fails in force.

Offa. Young prince, you talk this well.
But ne'er shall threats, when other motives fail,
The soul of Offa sway.—Restrain thy rage.
A future moment, haply, may concede
What from thy wish the present hour withholds.

Elf. Oh! wretched princess, from what height of happiness
Art thou cast down?—My woes, like famish'd wolves,
Wait to devour me. O my lord, my husband.—
My father!—shall these dear and tender names,
Which I so fondly cherish'd, prove but titles
Of sorrow and despair? and shall the ties
Which seem'd by hand of angels wove, to draw
Me kindly to you both, prove racking cords
To strain my heart asunder?—Nature, nature,
Duty, and love, oh whom shall I renounce?—
Whom follow?—Ev'ry way, o most undone.—
Can I renounce thee, Ethelbert, whose love
I tender more than life? And o, my father,
Can I begin to stand in bold rebellion
Against that will I ne'er oppos'd before?—

Offa. These transports are most vain. Retire, Elfrida.
Forbear the sight of Anglia's king. Remember,
Obedience prompt in this, thy father deems
Test of thy duty.

Elf. Sooner from their orbs
Tear forth these eyes, with all their bleeding cords.

Can misers yield their treasures? Can the matron
Give to the ruffian's sword her only child,
Price of her travail, nurfeling of her hopes?
Here let me sink, and lose all sense and feeling
Of what I was, what am, and what may be.

Offa. Virgins, attend your mistress hence. No more,
Elfrida; on thy life, wake not my wrath.

Elf. Oh! cruel father. Prince, we must become
Dead to each other; so my father dooms,
No more to meet, speak; love, or ev'n to think
That thus we lov'd, and thus we bade adieu.
Yet surely we shall meet; there is a place
For wretched souls from vile existence freed.
And oft the spirit which shall wing it's flight
Before the kindred mind, shall seek it's mate,
And whisper it away, and imp it's plumes,
To reach the blest abode.

Ethel. By every tie,
Divine and human, thou art now my bride;
No mortal force shall part us.—Cruel tyrant, [to Offa.]
The measure of thy fraud is now complete,
And of my patience.—Now for punishment.—
My valiant warriors, if ye love your king,
Can ye behold his wrongs? For me and vengeance,
Draw your good swords.

Offa. Thy blood be on thy head;—
Advance my chosen band.

[As the two kings, with their attendants, are on the point of engaging each other, Elfrida rushes forward, and throws herself on her knees between the two parties.]

Elf. Oh father——prince——
 Restrain your rage, or see me fall the victim
 Of your dissension.——Thro' this panting breast
 Shall the first blow be sped ; ye shall not pass,
 But o'er these trampled limbs, to mutual slaughter !—
 Spare me, my sire, and sheath thy fatal sword !
 And chief to thee, my darling, my espous'd,
 To thee I call.——Oh, by the name of love,
 And all our hopes of happiness to come,—
 Forbear, forbear !

Offa. Daughter thy voice prevails——
 I will not stain this holy place with blood.——
 Thou, prince, revere the present deity.—— *[to Ethelbert.]*
 My child, retire ; thou must no more behold
 The king of Anglia ; and thy prompt obedience,
 To this my strict command, will prove, to him,
 Sure pledge of safety.——I will hear no more.
 Guards bear her hence. Remember the condition.

Elf. Oh king of Anglia, oh my lord, my husband !——
 Oh cruel sire !

[Elfrida, with her female attendants, is borne off by the guards.]

Ethel. The mounting fire hath pass'd,
 That fed my passion, as the lightning brief !—

And now I melt in softness feminine;
 And, feeble as a chidden babe, could seek
 The mean relief of tears — A leaden sleep
 Hangs on each sense, and weighs down all my pow'rs.
 [*Exit* Ethelbert.]

S C E N E III.

Offa. The die is cast.—What have I done?—O, Sigebert,
 This act is thine. Thy counsels have compell'd me,
 Ev'n to the brink and edge, where yawns below
 A dreadful precipice.—Here let me stand,
 Collected, summon all my wand'ring thoughts,
 And fathom, if I can, with stedfast eye,
 The gulf before me.

Sige. Can the mighty Offa,
 The child of war, the minion of renown,
 When glory calls him with her awful voice,
 Refuse to hear? When pow'r imperial woos
 With lofty charms, avert his loathing eyes?
 When countless treasures only wait his grasp,
 Close and withdraw his hand?—Oh diff'rent far,
 Were Offa's thoughts, when with victorious arm
 Northumbria's crest he struck, and from his sway
 A province tore; or when, the kentish bands

Quell'd and confounded, wide his banners wav'd
 In conquer'd Aldrick's plains. Far diff'rent then,
 When haughty Kenwolf, rival of his might,
 Essay'd in arms what Mercia could, and sunk.

Offa. The quick and fiery pow'r of intellect,
 With sudden change, now fluctuates here, now there,
 Like northern lights along the starry cope,
 That shooting tremulous forebode the storm—
 The storm indeed; alternate passions rage
 Tempestuous through my soul;—as 'twere a rush,
 They bend the rooted purpose. Rugged virtue
 Hardy and firm, the growth of many years,
 Shakes at the blast, and on the ground will strew
 Her verdant honours.

Sige. To preserve them rather
 Refreshing dews shall come, and soft'ring gales;
 The tears of pleasure, and the glad acclaims
 Of Mercia's people, for their peace secur'd
 To late posterity, shall on your laurels
 Descend, and softly breathe, and bid them rise,
 With bolder growth, and hide their heads in heav'n.
 But pardon me, my lord, this wav'ring mood,
 Unworthy all of thee, with wonder fills
 Thy faithful servant. Offa's mighty thoughts
 Were wont disclaim the weakness feminine
 Of doubt and sudden change, and like his sword
 Keen, bright, unbending, forceful, to their mark
 With prompt decision flew.

Offa. And well they might.

For plain and obvious, hitherto, the path
 Before me stretch'd ; and in the same abode
 Fame, int'rest, virtue, dwelt. But now disjoin'd
 Their dwellings wide, and intricate the way,
 Befet with thorns and dark with mist and cloud,
 That leads to each.—Retire, good Sigebert,
 Behold our queen—Somewhat of import high
 To us, or to the state dwells on her mind,
 Which to disclose she has our private ear
 This day solicited. In some short space
 Let valiant Ella wait upon our leisure.

[*Exit Sigebert.*]

S C E N E IV.

OFFA and BERTHA.

Bertha come near,—nay why is this ? Your looks
 Are blank with ghastly fear ; your trembling limbs
 Scarce bear you, with a slow reluctant pace.—
 Of late I mark, with bitterness of soul,
 That care or sickness from your florid cheek
 Hath chac'd the bloom of health, and lively cheer.

Ber. Indeed 'tis true,—my mind with secret care
Hath been o'er-labour'd ; and this feeble frame
Hath suffer'd with its inmate. Many a night
These lids have been estrang'd from balmy sleep ;
Or if perchance, with watching overpower'd,
In slumbers brief I sunk, terrific dreams
Have render'd rest more wearisome than toil.

Offa. Oftimes have you profest to tell me tidings
Of import strange ; but, ever, as you seem'd
Addrest to speak, and I attentive stood,
Your pale lip quiver'd, on your falt'ring tongue
Th' imperfect accents died ; and, as I urg'd you
To speak with confidence, in faint low sounds
You murmur'd forth—the hour is not yet come !
Ev'n now you start—and the sharp glance of horror
Contracts your eyes, as tho' within their orbits
They would retire from day, and lose their functions.

Ber. The pow'rs of ill possess my soul. The demons [*aside.*
Of falsehood forge and fashion Bertha's organs
To sounds pernicious.—Know, my gracious lord,
I cannot speak. Some saving pow'r may yet
Redeem me from myself.

Offa. Still do you tremble ?
The changing hues alternate on your cheek.

Ber. 'Tis done. 'Tis past. He may not live for me, [*aside.*
And shall not for another---for Elfrida.—
Remorse, thou vain intruder, down---No more---

Now thou art dead.--The door is clos'd for ever,
On pity, as on hope !

Offa. Will you not speak ?
Why do you trifle thus with my impatience ?
Oh speak !--How wild her looks ! Some dreadful thing,
Sure, labours in her breast, that with a front,
Thus strange and hideous, in the prologue threatens.
By ev'ry blessed faint, and minister
Of light, I charge thee, speak.

Ber. Well, I have steel'd
My heart with courage ; to reveal a story,
Which somewhat criminal I hold myself
So long from thee concealing ; yet my mind
Scarce yields to credit such a tale, related
Of him, whose outward form and royal birth
Promise exalted hopes, and princely virtues.
But night by night, in monitory dreams,
Thine image faint and bleeding at my side
Is ever present.

Offa. Heav'ns ! can Ethelbert--
Yet wherefore should I doubt ? When he from Offa
No thought of peril harbours.--He, as false
And fabulous would hold th' intelligence
Of what works in this bosom.--Oh proceed.

Ber. Some few nights since, two of the virgins nearest
By duty to my person, in the shade,
After a scorching day, enjoy'd the freshness
Of welcome eve.--'Twas where the grove of beech

Bounds the wide orchard ground, that, white with blossom,
Impregnates now the breeze.

Offa. I know the place ;
If I remember, there, my falcon lost,
And long thro' Mercia sought in vain, young Edbald
Recover'd on the topmost bough.

Ber. My virgins
An arbour sought ; and deep in earnest converse
Distinct, for other sound than whisp'ring leaves
And intermitted strain of nightingale
Was none, conceal'd from them, two men were heard ;
But by the voice familiar to their ears
They knew old Ardulf and the king of Anglia.—
Much Ethelbert complain'd of love delay'd,
And tax'd thee with injustice ; hoary Ardulf,
In age impetuous with the fire of youth,
Urg'd him, by violence, to snatch the prize,
Which fair entreaties hitherto had fail'd
To win.—“ Occasion prompts ; old Offa's arm
“ Hath lost its nerve and pith.”——

Offa. Old Offa, said he ?
And that this arm had lost its nerve and pith ?—
Oh they shall feel—

Ber. Nay, good, my lord, be patient.
“ Mercia,” said Ardulf, “ views, with fond delight,
“ The rising promise of thy gallant youth ;—
“ For Offa's sons, their helpless infancy
“ Bars them from hope or prospect of a crown ;

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" And were Elfrida thine, and Mercia's king
 " At rest within the tomb, to thee, his throne
 " Were of ascent most easy."

Offa. What reply'd,
 To these suggestions, Ethelbert?

Ber. As when
 A trav'ler from an hill, with sudden view,
 Before him spread in prospect fair, beholds
 A city, with its glitt'ring spires and tow'rs,
 And urges on his course, with double speed;
 Such eagerness the youthful king display'd,
 To reach the tempting goal, which in perspective
 Before him lay; sure pledge of Anglia's greatness.
 Your death was then determin'd, and old Ardulf,
 Contriver of the mischief, charg'd himself
 With its completion. Here, the fable night,
 Fast closing round my virgins, warn'd them home.

Offa. Enough was heard; and, by the heav'nly pow'rs,
 Whose sure protection in th' embattled field
 Was ne'er withheld from Offa, on the heads
 Of Ethelbert and Ardulf, shall their guilt
 Be tenfold visited. No more remorse,
 No feeble wav'ring now. O Sigebert,
 I yield me to thy counsels whole. What, Ella! —

Ber. Think on the smiling pledges of our love;
 They grasp thy knees, they stretch their little arms,
 They cry to thee for safety. Think on Bertha;
 Widow'd and fad, the victim of her grief,

And fierce Elfrida's rage ; for well I know,
 She views me with such hate, as still pursues,
 From envious offspring of a former bed,
 The father's second choice.—Be prompt and firm.

[*Exit Bertha.*]

SCENE V.

OFFA, SIGEBERT, and ELLA.

Offa. Brave Ella, from my chosen bands select
 Twice ten battalions. Haste to Anglia's bounds :
 Her present state of careless ease supine
 Precludes resistance. Overspread her plains ;
 'Till Domnoc's* tow'rs, beside the roaring deep,
 Receive your host. There camp'd await my coming.—
 Wonder not, but obey—Yet more I would—
 But why does shame thus mantle on my cheek?—
 My tongue is palsy'd.—Learn from Sigebert
 Thy further charge.

[*Exit Offa.*]

* The ancient capital of East-Anglia now overflowed by the sea.

S C E N E VI.

SIGEBERT *and* ELLA.

Ella. A change so violent
And sudden, from the feast and nuptial song
To warlike preparation, and the shout
Of martial fury!

Sige. Muse not, valiant Ella,
Nor stand with folded arms in silence wrapt.
The king hath wisely doom'd. The hour is come,
That adds East-Anglia, with her sea-beat plains,
To Mercia's realm. On every side secure,
Bounded by mighty rivers, or the sea,
Complete and whole, a fortress in herself,
Our land shall scorn invaders. To maintain
This glorious prize indisputably ours,
An act of prompt and necessary daring
Requires thy faithful sword; which, if thy breast
With love and duty to thy royal master,
Or patriot virtue glows, thou wilt not now
Withhold.

Ella. When was the day, that Ella's spear,
If glory call'd, or duty to his king,
Slept cold, or unperforming, in his hand?

Sige. Young Ethelbert must fall.—Nay start not back :
 Thy country's weal demands it.—Open force
 Were vain.—To yon dark shade at early dawn,
 And oft at closing eve, doth he resort.
 Thither to cheer his lonely hours, if fame
 Err not, the bright Elfrida too repairs.
 The path from hence is dark and intricate ;
 The spreading trees, in close embrace o'erhead,
 Unite their tops ; and from their rugged arms,
 Impervious to the sight, in fragrant wreaths
 The tufted woodbines hang. The place is apt——
 The king's command is positive.—More speech
 Were needless, when intelligence with duty
 Combines, as in thy soul.

[*Exit Sigebert.*]

S C E N E VII.

ELLA, alone.

Oh wretched Ella !
 Why wert thou singled out for shame ? What act
 In thy long life of warfare branded thee,
 By cruelty or baseness, for the task
 Of an assassin ? Shall this trusty sword,
 My lov'd companion for twice twenty years

In toil and danger, which was never brandish'd,
 Save when in open fight I met my foe,
 And face to face, be stain'd with guiltless blood?—
 A monarch's blood—young—gentle—wise and brave?—
 Offa may kill; but never shall debase
 Old Ella with the name of murderer.

S C E N E VIII.

ARDULF and ELLA.

Ard. A stir unusual through the court of Mercia
 Resounds; her warriors muster, as for battle.
 Some furbish up their arms, some poise their spears,
 Some trap their fiery steeds. Where'er I turn,
 I meet such hurried and amazed looks,
 As tho' the trumpet from the beacon sounded,
 And warning fires on ev'ry summit glar'd,
 To mark the foes approach. How fares brave Ella?
 Thou canst explain this myst'ry.—What portend
 These warlike preparations?—Thou art sad.—
 Why thus avert thy face? Methinks a tear
 Glitters in that stern eye, the dread of foes.

Ella. Never before was Ella's bosom torn
 With such conflicting passions.—Duty first
 To Mercia's king, through many a year of toil,
 Ne'er disobey'd; then, mercy and compassion;

[*Aside.*

Next, honour's sacred voice, which still supreme
 Hath sway'd my soul; and last, religion's law;—
 All adverse to that duty.—For this time
 Offa commands in vain.—True, I am sad.—
 I may not speak the cause; but, trust my tongue,
 'Tis worth a soldier's sorrow.—For the love
 I bear the young and gallant Ethelbert,
 Let him fly hence. I may not more reveal,
 But mark my warning voice, which sounds not lightly.

[Exit Ella.]

SCENE IX.

ETHELBERT and ARDULF.

Ard. My royal lord, I tremble at your stay;
 Each moment that you linger, by a hair
 The sword terrific hangs. Nor you alone
 It menaces; but your devoted realm
 Must feel those horrors, which the wild ambition
 Of Mercia's king diffuses thro' our isle;—
 The smoke of cities burn'd, and harvests wasted,
 The shrieks of violated maids, the cry
 Of widow'd matrons and their orphan-babes!

Ethel. I can believe whatever base or vile
 Thy tongue can utter, or thy thoughts suggest,

Of Mercia's king.—He's ta'en me in the toils.—

Unveil'd I now can read the guilty purpose

Of his dissembled love and specious wiles ;

And did not fair Elfrida's angel form

Cling round this heart and melt my soul ; the sword

Should speak my gratitude. Ev'n to the beard,

Would I reproach his perfidy, and write it,

In characters most plain and legible,

On his imperious brow.

Ard. Oh think, my lord,—

Not from the restless aims of wild ambition

Thy danger only, but from female rage

Of charms despis'd, resentful. Pride and scorn,

And jealousy, combining all, will goad

To madness Bertha's soul, and raise a flame

Thy blood alone can quench.

Ethel. Unhappy woman !—

Just are thy fears from Bertha. Well I know

What pangs, what hells her ardent soul endures ;

While fierce and manly passions, with their war,

O'erwhelm and harass the weak female form,

Where shall the spirit stay, which thus hath dar'd

What woman boldest can ?

Ard. The time, my lord,

Requires a vigorous and prompt decision.

Ev'n now the storm may burst ; confirm your soul,

To wrestle with its fury. Wer't not good

To fly this court, where snares surround your path,
And on your native plains the standard raise ?

Ethel. That, Ardulf, be thy care.—With fiery speed
Repair to Domnoc ; summon all my pow'rs ;
And from the swains, whose toil with waving corn
The bank of Humber cloaths, and from the train
Whose sinewy arms subdue the wave, and reap,
'Midst dews of midnight and the howling storm,
Their harvest from the deep, select the prime.
Soon will I join your force, whom th' only hope
To bear Elfrida partner of my flight
Detains in Mercia.

Ard. Here, I rooted stand
Until I conquer. Thou must fly with Ardulf.
I will not supplicate thee, but command ;
For sure my years, my love and services,
May claim authority. Thou must away.—
Nay, look not stern. I will entreat thee then.
If thou hast pity for these hoary hairs,
Think on thy danger. 'Tis not from surmise,
Or anxious love, but grounded certainty,
I warn thee thus ; thy treach'rous host this night
Some fatal blow designs.

Ethel. My worthy Ardulf,
Fear not ; thou know'st, that, led by gallant Oswy,
A brave and chosen squadron tends my steps,
Sufficient to protect from force by day,
Or treachery by night. Heav'n combat with thee,

And sharpen thy good falchion. Loofe thine hold,
Wake not my wrath, for, by th' immortal pow'rs,
I will not hence to night.

Ard. Then sharp enough
My falchion is, to pierce a loyal heart,
And spare thefe aged eyes the cruel fcene
To-morrow's fun may show.

Ethel. On thy allegiance
Forbear ; and if thine heart, with love or pity,
Beats for thine Ethelbert, as fure it does,
Delay not thy departure.

Ard. O, my lord,
I go ; but never with fuch liftlefs tread,
And heart fo heavy, did old Ardulf feek
The tented plain. I wont to feel more blithe,
When trumpets founded to the charge, than youth
Apparell'd for the dance, when minftrels fmite
Th' enliv'ning harp. Farewell, my much lov'd lord,
And, oh, perhaps, for ever !

Ethel. Nay, good Ardulf,
Wound not my foul with mournful auguries.
All will be well. Ere crimson in the weft
The third revolving fun fhall clofe his courfe,
Elfrida's radiant form and feraph fmile
Shall grace the camp of happy Ethelbert.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

An Apartment in Offa's Palace.

ELFRIDA.

FORGIVE me, nature, and ye hallow'd pow'rs,
 That watch o'er filial duty, pardon me ;
 If, in rebellion to my father's will,
 I yield to love's command.—'Tis near the hour.—
 I must reflect ; for with persuasive accents,
 That tongue, to which my doating heart accords
 In perfect unison, will urge me soon.—
 To what?—I gasp and tremble, and my brain
 Is dizzy at the thought.—O father, father,
 Lov'd awful name, must thou resound no more,
 In matin oraison, or chant at eve,
 From poor Elfrida's tongue ?—O Ethelbert,
 My lord, my husband, so this heart must deem,
 These lips must call thee ;—can I then forego—

S C E N E II.

Enter ETHELBERT.

Ethel. What gentle voice, in sweetly plaintive tones,
Invokes the name of Ethelbert ?

Elf. In sooth,
My thoughts, as well as tongue, were busy'd whole
With Ethelbert.

Ethel. For that, may gracious heav'n
Show'r down its blessings on thee. Be the omen
Propitious to my hopes. Alas, you sigh ;
Your face averted hides a gushing tear.—
Why are you silent ?

Elf. How can I behold,
How speak to thee ? when my relentless fire,
With unprovok'd and cruel outrage, mars
The hope he nurtur'd. And, when I reflect—
There is the mortal stab—what further ill
He yet may meditate, with grief and shame
O'erwhelm'd, I dread thine eyes.—And then, each word
Exchang'd with thee, incurs a father's curse,
Sternly against our intercourse denounc'd.

Ethel. The moments press, my love : your tyrant father
Holds me a captive here, who came his guest.
His snares around me spread, and, hour by hour,
Nearer he draws them. Should I now delay,
Around my head they close. In Mercia's court
This night if I remain, thine Ethelbert
Sees not to-morrow's sun. Now is the time
To show thy love sincere, as thou hast vow'd.

Elf. Sincere !—O Ethelbert, thou little know'st :
Would I might sleep away my span of life,
And only wake in heav'n to peace and thee.

Ethel. This hour eventful with my doom is fraught ;
On it my life, and dearer far than life,
My love, depends.

Elf. Oh whither shall I fly ?
To that thy speech would draw me,—to thy camp ?
There, stern in arms, th' embattled squadrons breathe
Revenge against my fire. Soon will ye meet,
Amidst th' oppos'd files ; your fatal swords
Aim'd at each others crest ; while I, spectatress
Of the sad tragedy, must weep and bleed,
Whoe'er prevails.

Ethel. Wilt thou not share my flight ?

Elf. No.—Put a ponyard in Elfrida's hand,
To pierce her father's bosom !—Share thy flight !
And join thy camp, array'd in warlike pomp,
To triumph o'er my parent !—Tho' I love thee
More than the light of heav'n, and rest thy sight,

Within a convent's gloom, a widow'd mourner,
Will pass my wretched days, in tears and cries.

Ethel. Why will you torture whom you love? Why seek
Despair and grief, when hope and smiling days
Hang on this hour, and crowd for thine acceptance?

Elf. Reflect o' prince,—what dow'r shall sad Elfrida
Bring to thine arms? A father's wounding curse,
That curse, which never weak or unavailing
From lips parental falls.—Oh me unhappy!
Return, ye days of childhood innocence,
Smiling, return. Then my lov'd father's praise,
In words spontaneous, to the sounding chords
Attempter'd, flow'd, and caught the echoes round,
And bade them learn the tale of hardihood,
And teach the list'ning swains their monarch's prowess.
And oft the village maiden, that with song
Deceives the toilsome hours, would cease the strain
Of love disastrous, or enchantment drear,
To tell how Offa won the well-fought field.

Ethel. Can'st thou unmov'd behold my tears, my danger?—
Be thou obey'd. — Receive the sacrifice
Of this devoted life.

Elf. What means my love?
Can dangers threat the life of Ethelbert
Nor touch Elfrida!

Ethel. Yes, let Offa come,
I wait his cruelty; for she who sways
The destiny of Ethelbert decrees it.

Soon let him plunge the sword, by black ambition
 Urg'd home, and pierce this unoffending breast,
 Unless a faithful love and fond desires
 In Mercia's realm are sins, for she who prizes
 The treach'rous wiles of a remorseless father
 More than a lover's truth, and weighs the curse
 By guilt and frenzy utter'd, 'gainst the life
 Of him who breathes for her alone, decrees it.

S C E N E III.

Enter, to them, EBBA and JUSTUS.

Ebba. Health to my lord! and would to heav'n the tidings
 That Ebba bears might better grace his tongue.

Ethel. How say'st thou Ebba? As thou pass'd from Anglia,
 Met'st thou not Ardulf? On his valiant arm,
 In dangers often prov'd, my soul relies
 For refuge from the storm, which well I know
 Prepar'd to fall.

Ebba. It has already fall'n.
 I met not Ardulf; haply, now a captive,
 Not for himself, but for his lord, he mourns.
 Resistless as a torrent, o'er our plains
 The mercian armies spread. Some hasty levies
 To check their fury strove, but broken soon
 And wide dispers'd through Anglia, their dismay
 Increas'd the gen'ral panic.

Just. True, the paths,
 That hence towards Anglia lead, are all beset
 With Offa's scatter'd bands, who have in charge,
 No less, than the captivity or death
 Of royal Ethelbert; but faithful Ardulf
 Hath 'scap'd their ambush. Favour'd by disguise
 He sought my hermitage, and bade me haste
 To proffer an asylum, where conceal'd
 You may remain, while through the land his care
 Collects a pow'r, which with th' invader soon
 Shall cope in open field. Meantime, 'twere rash
 And vain t' expose your person.

Elf. King of Anglia,
 The blush of shame for Offa's cruel wrong
 Glows on my cheek, and greatly should I fear,
 Knew I not well thy just and noble nature,
 Lest thou shouldst hate me, for my father's crimes;
 Yet, what I can,—alas! poor expiation
 Of guilt so mighty. Let the daughter's love
 Thy suff'rings from the fire atone.

Ethel. Is this
 Atonement only? This poor expiation
 Of suff'rings from thy fire?—Propitious hour,
 Thou hast assur'd the blessing which outweighs
 Long years of bondage with the fetter'd slave,
 Or exile from the face of day in dungeons,
 Where light hath never pierc'd.

Elf. While yet I hop'd
 That Offa might relent, nor peril fear'd
 To thee; my filial love, with fond delay,
 Excuse oppos'd; but now, with alter'd mind,
 Thy danger seen, I urge thy flight, prepar'd,
 The partner of whatever good or ill
 Remains for thee in store.—Thy realm laid waste—
 An ambush for thy life!—lend him your wings
 Angels of light, that bear th' almighty's mandate
 Through heav'n, and earth, and sea.—Haste, haste, my love,
 Thy will alone is mine. I come—I fly—

Just. The moments press, my lord; the sun declines
 Behind yon hills; and, through the waving trees,
 Disarm'd of half his fire, the crimson orb
 Shoots a departing lustre, and illumes,
 As with a thousand lamps, the glitt'ring casements
 Of hall and armoury.—Th' impending night
 Must well be husbanded; her friendly veil
 Alone can promise safety. Faithful Ebba
 Will guide you to my hermitage. I feel
 A spirit in this bosom urge me on
 To seek the king of Mercia. With a tongue,
 By human greatness or the frowns of man,
 Unaw'd, will I reproach him. Heav'n, perhaps,
 May make my voice an humble instrument
 To call him home to piety and peace.

[Exit Justus.]

S C E N E IV.

ELFRIDA, ETHELBERT, and EBBA.

Elf. Alwina only shall partake my flight.
 She has been ever faithful. O farewell,
 Ye peaceful dear abodes of early prime :
 Ye bounded all my wishes once. I thought,
 Bless'd in my childish sports and harmless thoughts,
 And a fond parent's smile, that heav'n itself
 Had nothing more to give. Alas how chang'd !
 My happiness no more within myself
 I find ; it hangs on thee, o Ethelbert.
 My wish no more within my father's walls
 Is bounded now. It flies abroad with thee,
 Uncertain what it would. And on the future
 A die of dreadful import trembling waits.

Ethel. Two hundred gallant spearmen tried in arms
 Shall guard us in our flight. Their fiery steeds,
 On Africk's sands, or rich iberian plains,
 By swarthy moors were bred. With nostrils wide,
 They snuff the gale ; and sweep along the plain,
 Keen as the northern blast.

Ebba. Ere morrow's dawn,
 We gain the hermitage. I know it well,
 A river with its ouzy waters round
 Impales an islet, and approach denies,
 Save by a narrow caufeway known to few,

The hunter of the wild, or those who, led
 By pious motives, with devotion's foot,
 The rev'rend place explore. From eyes profane
 A clump of oaks, coeval with the soil,
 An humble mansion hide, and round inspire
 A gloom religious, suited to the life
 Of him who bides within; for there, devote
 To heav'n, or men whose thoughts on heav'n are bent,
 Long time hath Justus dwelt; and from the soil,
 With his own hands, obtain'd such simple food,
 As nature for an aged frame requires,
 Preserv'd by temperance and tranquil thoughts
 From languor and decay.

Ethel. Behold the queen.

Let us retire. And Ebba, thou, when darkness
 Involves the face of things, collect my train
 And wait, in silence, at the postern gate
 Behind the sacristy. With circuit wide
 Coasting the palace walls, we thence may gain,
 By secret paths, an unfrequented ford.
 Then, through the woods that clothe the river's side
 We shape our course, and gain the hermitage.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E V.

BERTHA.

*Entering at the opposite part of the stage ;—she looks earnestly
after them.*

Oh wretch what hast thou done ?—What web of fate
Hast thou prepar'd ?—Ha !—there the lovers pass'd—
See—how she hangs upon him ! May perdition !—
Ev'n on the brink and precipice they dream,
The main o'erhanging.—Soft the verdant turf,
And gay the wild-flow'r flaunting o'er the verge ;
With treach'rous toil th' undermining wave
Assiduous beats below, with sudden crash
The soil unstable mixes with the deep.—
Their love is innocent ; but what is thine ?
O foul, most foul !—Shall I then fly to Offa ?
Unsay the falsehoods of my guilty tongue,
And die in peace ?—And shall I then confess
Such unexampled guilt ? That, shame forbids.—
And shall they triumph o'er th' untimely grave
Of miserable Bertha ?—Shall I join
Their hands and fall a sacrifice, to grace
The nuptial rites ?—If I must fall, and sure
'Tis so decreed, their fall shall sweeten mine.—
Whene'er we doubt and hesitate on ill,

The tempting fiend still sets before our eyes,
 And places in our reach apt instruments,
 That court our hand and make perdition sure.
 For lo, this Sigebert.

S C E N E VI.

BERTHA and SIGEBERT.

The king of Anglia
 Was here ev'n now, and, with him, Offa's daughter,
 Regardless of her father's curse denounc'd
 On converse with his foe.

Sig. Much danger hence
 To Mercia's king results; for though, by nature,
 The princess to her sire is dutiful,
 Yet what the wiles of Ethelbert may work,
 Moulding her to his wishes, well and justly
 May raise suspicion.

Ber. Well, indeed, and justly—
 Precarious is the life of Mercia's king,
 While Ethelbert survives. I have employ'd
 My utmost pow'r, entreaties, arguments,
 Tears and reproaches, but in vain. His soul
 Uncertain veers, irresolution strange
 And to his nature foreign.

Sige. Offa comes.

Slow and reluctant is he, to complete
What prudence dictates, and alone can give
Stability to greatness. Yet my voice
Hath rous'd a spirit of sublime ambition,
And godlike thirst of rule. Mine be the care,
To guard his heart, and stifle, in the birth,
Compunctious visitings.

Ber. No, 'twere a deed,
To pull down curses—do not—yet, to see
Their wishes crown'd, each in the other blest!—
I cannot bear it.—Sigebert, thy zeal
For Offa's life deserves—destruction seize
Both thee, and me, and all the world—my brain
Is stung—and now it flames and bursts in chaos.

[*Exit.*

S C E N E VII.

OFFA and SIGEBERT.

The former seems wrapt in thought.

Offa. What can the fury of her speech portend?
What wild unwonted rage o'erwhelms her reason!
But mutable, as shifting clouds, and void
Of form, as they, is woman's vagrant mind.

[*aside.*

And vain the labour were, to fathom it,
 With reason's plummet. Now, an higher care
 Demands my thoughts; for see the king approach.

Offa. Could I recall times past—o Offa, Offa,
 The last two hours!—How are thy laurels stain'd,
 With perfidy and murder!—Murderer!—
 My soul revolts against that sound.—A murderer!
 Yet why?—'Tis justice—Ethelbert contrives
 Against my life.—So runs the specious tale.
 But then what proof?—And shall a mere surmise,
 An hearsay from a woman's tongue, which oft
 Deals forth, as certainties, the vain illusions
 Bred in the speaker's mind, and fictions forg'd
 Or truth with falsehood colour'd and deprav'd.—

O Sigebert.

[Seeing Sigebert.

Sige. What would my royal lord?

Offa. What mandate hast thou giv'n to warlike Ella?—
 And yet I know too well. Thou need'st not speak,
 And I should blush to hear.

Sige. My gracious lord,
 Such mandate, as the mighty work in hand
 Requires, was giv'n; and, lest his diligence
 Should fail, like services were giv'n in charge,
 To some of truth approv'd; and if their zeal—

Offa. I know what thou wouldst say; but hear'n forefend,
 Their zeal were all so prompt. We will recall
 The cruel mandate.

Sige. First reflect my lord
 Ere this your troops, with rapid march possess
 The plains of Anglia. Is young Ethelbert
 A spirit, that will tamely yield a kingdom,
 In long succession heir'd? Or bear the wrongs
 Which thou hast offer'd?—Goaded by revenge,
 To more than common daring, he will prove
 A foe most formidable?

Offa. 'Tis too true.
 Heav'ns, what a web of cruelty and guilt,
 The first injustice weaves!

Sige. This very hour
 Elfrida joins his flight. My faithful spies
 O'erheard their am'rous parley. With what force,
 He bears her hence; what refuge hath prepar'd,
 Where safely she may wait, while he, in arms,
 Pursues her father's life.

Offa. It is enough.
 This hour he dies. My disobedient child,
 In living death, within a cloister's walls,
 And penitential works shall meditate
 A father's curse fulfill'd. Thou, Sigebert,
 This night's great business govern. Let my troops
 Possess each avenue, that from the palace,
 Towards Anglia lead; that none unquesti'd pass.
 The rest thou knowst; and I may trust thy zeal.

[*Exit Sigebert.*]

S C E N E V I I I.

OFFA and JUSTUS.

But Justus comes, religion on his brow,
 And gentle wisdom beaming from his eye.—
 Thy looks are clouded ; tell me, holy man,
 What deed of outrage, cruelty, or fraud,
 Hath vex'd thy righteous soul, that Offa's hand
 May reach th' offender, and th' offended cheer
 With retribution ample.

Just. Ask thyself,
 O king!—Thy sin is great.—Think not my tongue
 Can gloze with flattery. Ill it would become
 The man, whose days are consecrate to heav'n,
 To fear the pow'rs of earth. What can thy wrath,
 But speed an old man's journey to the place
 Where long his heart and hopes have dwelt before him.

Offa. Oh rev'rend Justus, thy reproving tongue
 Hath ever licence ; for I know that zeal
 In virtue's cause, not bitterness of heart,
 Inspires thy words. The pow'r, to whom thy vows
 And oraisons are paid, in mercy, sends thee
 To call the wanderers home. Thy friendly wounds,

Like those proceeding from the leech's hand,
Give health to souls diseas'd

Just. Hear then, O king,
And tremble.—Heav'n begins, this very hour,
To visit thine offences.—For the queen—
I will not veil or palliate the horrors,
These eyes have view'd, but rather urge them home,
To strike thine heart.

Offa. Saidst thou our queen? That blow
Would fall, indeed, most heavy. For what horrors
Wouldst thou prepare me?—Speak, and yet I tremble,
And fain would shun the tale, I needs must learn.

Just. A dreadful monument of wrath divine,
Your queen now presses to the fatal bourne,
Where sinners meet their doom.

Offa. What?—How?—Oh fly,
Oh save and guard her. All that Mercia holds
Of dear and precious shall be sacrific'd—
Oh let me haste.—

Just. No, spare thy heart that pang;
Thy guilt is great; yet, would the sight of Bertha
So rend thy heart-strings, that the chastisement
Were ev'n too cruel.

Offa. I fly, to prove the worst.
The voice, the looks, the soothing cares of love
Assuage the fiercest pangs.

Just. All aid is vain.
She cannot know thy love, or feel thy cares.

Reason hath left her seat. This very hour,
 Conscious of cruel wrong, by forg'd suggestion
 And falshoods vile, to royal Ethelbert,
 With which, it seems, your ear she had abus'd,
 And wrought you to contrive his death, the thought
 Became too grievous for her burthen'd soul.—
 To her distracted sense the bleeding form
 Of Anglia's king still present, goaded her,
 With scorpion sting so keen, that, in the rage
 And whirlwind of despair, she swallow'd poison.—
 Oh gracious heav'n ! She's here, with strength renew'd,
 From deadly languor.—Now prepare thyself,
 For horrors, which the tongue of man must fail
 To paint : and only guilt, like hers, can know,

S C E N E IX.

BERTHA *distracted* ; OFFA, JUSTUS, ATTENDANTS,

Ber I've drank the cup of passion.—Like the bane
 Of subtlest venom, it dries up my blood,
 And courses nimbly through the empty veins.—
 It flashes on my brain, consumes my heart,
 And hunts, from seat to seat, the failing sense.
 I know thee well, thou art a murderer.
 Thy hands are red ;—the blood of Ethelbert
 Is on them !

[*to Offa.*]

Offa. Now, indeed, I feel my crime,
In full deformity. This woman's pangs
Begin my punishment. Peace Bertha, speak,
Look up.—She knows me not.

Just. Oh, such a scene
Avert from christian souls, ye pow'rs of grace.

Ber. Ha!—what art thou? Some messenger from heav'n,
Fraught with glad tidings? Such thy hoary hairs,
Thine awful looks, and rev'rend garb bespeak.—
The hand of vengeance presses on my head.—
Oh save me, save me. Tell me, if thou canst,
Will shrift and penance wash away my stain?
Son of religion, tell me, should I fly
And grasp the altar, will th' avenging arm
Snatch me from thence? O hide me in the cloisters,
Where meek-eyed sisters chant the matin song,
With unpolluted lips. When Ethelbert
Shall come to seek me, let a snowy veil,
Conceal my lineaments; and to my bosom
The sacred cross I'll strain; and on my fingers
The rosary shall hang to cheat his eye.—
I burn, I burn.—O lay me where the bank
O'erhangs the stream, where gushing waters sound,
And waving poplars imitate the voice
Of timid lovers, whisp'ring in the dusk;
There, the cool rushing of the western gale
Shall fan my raging soul. My lips shall drink
The dew-drops, as they fall, to quench their fire.

Offa. Oh bear her hence; and sooth, with tend'rest care,
Her wand'ring mind. As idle sounds receive,
Wild and unfounded, what her frenzy utters.

Ber. Oh king of Anglia, stay. There, there, in flames
He pass'd, riding the metcours of the north.
Come, come; give me your wings ye winds;—I rise,
And now, I mingle with the clouds. Burst, burst,
And whelm me in a deluge. Wash away
All sense, all thought, all memory of past.
Hark, hark;—he calls again.—I follow thee.
Yet soft, I may not. My disastrous love
Kills where it follows. I destroy'd thee Ethelbert!—
Off, off, vile trappings of unseemly dust!—
The fiends are here.—They drag me to my doom.
The sulphur flames, the king of terror calls,
From his infernal throne, in thunder calls.—
I come—I fly—Hell! hell! I'm wholly thine.

[*She is borne off the stage.*]

S C E N E X.

OFFA and SIGEBERT.

Sige. My lord, the king of Anglia and your daughter,
Eluding our best diligence, are fled;

But doubt not, that this night from Ethelbert,
So well I have provided, takes alike
The pow'r and will to trouble your repose.

Offa. Hence from my presence, hence, thou haggard mischief
And may diseases, loathed as thy form,
And as thine actions foul, consume the remnant
Of thy pernicious life. This work is thine.

Sige. Are these the fruits of all my labour'd schemes?
Have I for this, with watchful nights, consum'd
This feeble frame, and worn the day in musing,
Of food and ease unmindful?—Be the fool
Accurst, who treads the labyrinth of courts;
And doubly curst th' ambitious slave, who sells
His peace and virtue, for a statesman's name.

Offa. I've sinn'd beyond redemption. Never more
Shall Offa's soul know rest, if Ethelbert—
That thought were madness.—Fly,—recall our troops,—
Prepare my fleetest speed.—Ourself will fly,
To seek that injur'd youth—This arm shall guard him.
Elfrida shall be his.—This very night,
With nuptial benediction, will I join
Their plighted hands.—I know his noble nature
Retains not anger.—He shall be my son,
Dear as young Ethelred.—In sight of heav'n,
I swear a solemn league of amity,
Between our kingdoms. Never shall my sword
Be drawn in wars unjust.—Ambition's glare
Shall dazzle me no more; but works or peace

And mercy shall obtain th' unfaded palm,
 Whose wreath outshines the laurel stain'd in blood.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

Night.—A gloomy forest with a cave; thunder and lightning.

ETHELBERT, ELFRIDA, ALWINA, EBBA and ATTENDANTS.

ETHELBERT.

ALAS! you faint Elfrida, let us seek
 Rest for your weary limbs. There is a cave,
 That seems, by nature, form'd for hapless love
 A friendly harbour. Thither let us tend.
 The gleaming fires, that run along the ground,
 Will guide our steps.

Ebba. Forgive thy servant's zeal;

Due west from hence, the hermit's dwelling lies,
 Not many leagues; and, could we reach that place,
 We were in safety. Compass'd as we are
 With Offa's squadrons, on the storm and darkness
 Depend our hopes of flight. The morning's dawn
 Will soon o'ertake us, for the star that reigns

At midnight in the zenith, ere the tempest
Began to rage, flood o'er our heads direct.

Ethel. Ebba, I thank thy love ; but fear and toil
So press Elfrida, that her strength would fail,
Should we proceed.

Alw. Alas, my gracious lord,
For pity seek yon cave : the night is fearful.
Along our horses backs, in unctuous streams,
The fiery vapours ran, blaz'd on their heads,
Or kindled thro' their manes—hark, hark, that peal
Of volley'd thunder !—Heav'n, in mercy, spare us!

Ethel. All nature's bonds are loose. The elements,
Absolv'd from their allegiance to her laws,
Usurp each other's place, and wildly wage
Intestine war ; or, more portentous, meet
And blend in league ill-sorted and discordant.
Now lightning fills the air, now, mix'd with rain,
The shooting meteors fall, an horrid show'r
Of fire and water scarce distinguishable.
Where'er we turn, the failing earth recedes.
All is a watry waste. The howling wind
Ploughs up the liquid plain, and whirls it round,
In stormy fleet.

Elf. My dearest Ethelbert,
Excuse a woman's weakness, that my heart,
Though thou art near me, sinks beneath the terrors
Of this most dreadful night.—I would not fear.

My soul is manly, but my woman's frame,
Feeble and frail, spite of my best resolves,
Depresses it, and I could melt in tears.

Ethel. My love, what have you suffer'd !—and for me—
As through the woods we pass'd, the tangled boughs
Thy garments rent, and bruise'd thy tender limbs,
And caught thy beauteous tresses. From thy locks
The drifted rain distils. Thy lover's hands
Shall press the moisture forth, and o'er his heart
The flowing gold expand. Soon, shall the warmth
Of this fond bosom dry it. Let my train
Collect the wither'd leaves and branches sere,
Scatter'd around this cave, and bid them flame
To comfort her chill'd limbs.

Elf. See, here are seats
Dispos'd by nature's hand. The shelving rock,
Commodious bench, projects, with downy moss,
Violet, and scented thyme, and tufted grass
O'er grown; and mantling o'er the rugged walls,
The creeping ivy spreads her tapestry,
Of bright and glossy green*. After the toils
Of night, this humble cave a palace seems,

* It may be asked, how could Elfrida see all this, as it was dark night? I answer, by the gleam of the meteors and conflagrations, that incessantly filled the air; and besides, by this time, the train of Ethelbert might have struck a light, to make a fire, as they were directed to do by him.

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With thee, my Ethelbert, whose gentle smile
Can ev'ry state endear, and ev'ry scene.

Ethel. What sufferings hath heroic love endur'd!—
My heart bleeds for them. Thou wert ever nurst
In pleasure's lap, and fondly lov'd, and cherish'd,
And never felt rude blast or driving rain,
Or knew but soft delights and golden ease,
Such as a palace yields.—To bear all this!—
Which well might foil the strength and fortitude
Of hardy soldiers. Sure, the life of Ethelbert,
Should it exceed the common space allow'd
To man, and all be spent in tender cares,
And fond observances, would prove too short
To show my gratitude.

Elf. All words and acts
Are infinitely weak, and fail to show
What thine Elfrida feels. The more I strive
To place my heart before thee, that thine eyes
May read its thoughts, the more expression fails.—
Sure I was born in some ill-omen'd hour,
For thy destruction. 'Twas this fatal form
That lur'd thy steps to Mercia. 'Twas this form
That arm'd my father's hand to injure thee.
This form laid Anglia waste. This fatal form
Exposes thee to the relentless rage
And perils of this night.

Ethel. My dearest, best,
Ev'n toils and sufferings may become delightful;

That draw forth gentle offices of kindness,
From those we love.

Ebba. My lord, this boding heart
Tells me we are pursued ; at intervals,
When the fell whirlwinds intermit their howl,
And thunders cease to roar, methinks, I hear
The sound of horse ; and once, with shrilly tone,
A bugle sounded.

Ethel. Haply, through the gloom,
Some forester belated seeks his way,
Entangled and alone.—Yet, lest the foe
Unguarded find us, let our scouts advance.—
Thou, Ebba, to the western path, that points
Towards Justus' dwelling ;—Osbert, to the north ;—
Morcar and Siward watch, with strict observance,
The south and east.

[*Exeunt Ebba, &c.*

Elf. The lightnings cease to flash,
A tender gleam of gray imperfect light
Struggles for birth, and streaks the leaden east,
Forerunner of the morning.—May the dawn,
On gold and purple wings, waft peace and joy
To my dear Ethelbert.

[*Ebba returns.*

Ethel. What tidings, Ebba ?

Ebba. Our scout, advanc'd, can hear the voice of men
Approaching through the shade ; and once the gleam

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Of flashing light, repell'd from burnish'd arms,
Shot fearful on his eyes.

Elf. Oh most undone.—

My lord, my Ethelbert, where shall we fly?—
My father comes. Oh save me from his rage.
He tears, he tears, thee from me.—Let us grow together
Thus, thus. No more to part.

Ethel. Prepare, to give

[to his train.

Our enemies such welcome, as a foe
Should meet from valiant men.—Forbear, my love,
Oh cling not thus around me. On my arm
Our future hopes depend.—This very now,
This precious moment, labours with our doom.
Well us'd, it gives to all our future lives
Security and love.—Must I, then, fly
From thine embraces? Must I break the clasps
Of thine encircling arms?

Elf. Yes, go, my warrior,
And strength and victory sit on thy helm.—
Yet, in the fight, for poor Elfrida's sake,
Be careful of thy life; and shouldst thou meet,
Amidst the hostile bands, my cruel father,
Oh think on me, think on this faithful breast,
And spare his rev'rend head. I know, the thought
Will stay the sword, uplifted for his fate.—
Must you then leave me?

Ethel. Better, seek the danger,
Than tamely wait its coming. Valiant Ebba,

Remain thou here ; an honourable charge,
 My lov'd Elfrida, to thy care I give ;
 And leaving thee, I march with confidence ;
 For well I know, no harm will reach her breast,
 But through thine own. Lead on to victory.

S C E N E II.

ELFRIDA, ALWINA, and EBBA.

Elf. Say, gentle friends, do you not hope my lord
 Will vanquish these assailants ?—Why, I know not,
 But sure my heart beats high, with lively cheer,
 And presages of good.—I did not think
 I could have borne to see my Ethelbert
 Go forth to battle ; but I know that heav'n,
 If ever it rewarded, here on earth,
 The good with favour, will protect his life,
 Palsy the hands, and blunt the sword and spear,
 That seek his gentle breast.

Alw. Yes, dearest princess,
 Heav'n will protect the virtuous Ethelbert,
 From hostile rage. His life is due to man,
 A pattern of perfection. He shall live,

To hold a mirror of connubial love
And faith unstain'd to ages yet unborn.

Elf. My poor Alwina, thine advent'rous love
Hath all thy hopes resign'd, to follow one
Whose gratitude can ill requite thy cares.
But fortune, yet, may smile; and happy days
In Anglia wait us. Mean while, let thy kindness
Recorded live, in fond remembrance here.

Ebba. Doubt not my lord will conquer; for his train,
Of worth approv'd and-hardihood, to quell
Tenfold their number of the mercian bands,
Excited by a monarch's voice and arm,
Belov'd like Ethelbert, will deeds atchieve
Beyond the strength of man.—Speak, warlike form.—

S C E N E III.

Enter, to them, a MESSENGER.

Advance not, on thy peril, ere thy tongue
Unfolds what errand bids thee through the gloom,
With vent'rous footsteps, dare the hideous wild,
And this more hideous storm. Though worn and fore
With toil thou seem'st, a wild and eager joy
Peers through thine eyes.—What art thou?

Meff. A true subject

To royal Ethelbert, I come from Ardulf,—
All night, with weary steps, I've journey'd. Oft,
Encount'ring with the mercian force, I scap'd,
Through favour of the darkness, and trac'd back
My steps with painful circuit. Deep morafs
Oftimes my feet entangled; oft the gulph
Of some still-wand'ring stream, with sudden plunge
O'erwhelm'd, receiv'd me. Oft I scal'd, with pain,
The steep impending crags. But all my toils
Are fully recompens'd. I now shall see
My king, and cheer his soul with joyful tidings.

Ebba. Our lord is gone to battle; but this princess
Takes a dear int'rest in whate'er befalls
The king of Anglia.

Elf. Here, repose thyself.
I see thee spent with labour. If thou bring'st
Aught good or happy, speak it; for my soul
Requires the healing balm of gladfome news.
But hark, a trumpet sounds.

Ebba. It is my lord's;
Our band returns.

Elf. Oh god, oh god, protect
My dearest Ethelbert! He comes, he comes.—
I tremble, but not with terror.—Yes, these eyes,
Again, shall gaze on him, these eager arms
Clasp him again, and strain him to my heart.—
I will go meet him;—lead me, lead me, Ebba.

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Support my steps,—Alwina, to thy care,
 That stranger I commend; an hour of leisure
 May serve his tidings. Hark, again, the trumpet.

[*Exeunt Elfrida and Ebbas*]

S C E N E IV.

ALWINA and MESSENGER.

Mess. How blest is Anglia's monarch, in a dame
 So fair and exquisite. Say, gentle maid,
 What subjects zealous for their prince's weal
 Would gladly learn, her name and origin.

Alw. Most freely, stranger, she is call'd Elfrida,
 To Mercia's warlike king she owes her birth.
 But fairer than her charms, although she shines
 A paragon of beauty, brighter far
 Than royal lineage is her virtuous fame.
 Thou, in return, disclose what welcome tidings,
 With speed unwonted, urg'd thy painful steps
 From Anglia hither.

Mess. Could I fly, the tidings
 Deserv'd a falcon's wing. Know, faithful Ardulf,
 Collecting a small band of vet'ran troops,
 Rally'd the fugitive and poor remains

Of Mercia's victory ; and, with forc'd march,
 Surpris'd the invaders in their camp supine,
 Lull'd in the wantonness of strength, and scorning
 A routed foe. The conflict held not long :
 Some fled disarm'd ; some, in the neighb'ring stream
 For safety plung'd, and found a wat'ry death ;
 Some, with their arms at random caught, and armour
 Unfitted and unbrac'd, a feeble fight
 Essay'd at distance ; but, full soon, the sword
 Of valiant Ardulf, thund'ring on their crests,
 A gen'ral rout compell'd.

Alw. Lift, lift, methinks

I hear the shouts of battle ; mix'd, they rise
 With yelling whirlwinds. Now, the clang of arms
 Comes pealing on mine ear.

Mess. Thou art deceiv'd.

'Tis but the wind, among the giant limbs
 Of these huge oaks ; they toss their knotty boughs,
 And imitate the sound of clashing swords,
 Or shield to shield oppos'd.—My lord, my king.

S C E N E V.

*Enter, to them, ETHELBERT, supported by EBBA, with
 ELFRIDA.*

Ethel. Oh 'twas a glorious night. Well have I flesh'd
 My sword. This turn,—o fortune, thou wert just,
 And crown'd the righteous cause.

Elf. Still, still, you bleed,—

I feel the warm tide gushing.—Let me tear
These robes, these tresses, to bind up your wound.

Ethel. I am not hurt, my love, I must be well
And happy near thee.—Long the mercian chief,
Held vict'ry doubtful.—'Twas a lucky blow,
That clove his casque. On ev'ry side, his train,
Confounded, fled, as if th' eternal arm
Was bar'd to smite them. Then, my ravag'd plains
And subjects murder'd crowded on my mind,
And bath'd my sword in vengeance. As he fled,
One coward turn'd, and sent an arrow back.

Meff. May heav'n, with vengeance, mark the caitiff wretch.

Ethel. Yet sure I thank him. To that shaft, I owe
Sensations, sweeter than I knew before.

Oh when my dear Elfrida's flow'r-soft hands,
Cold, smooth, and white as lilies, touch'd my arm,
To draw the bearded steel, methinks, my heart
Leap'd bounding to the place, to meet her touch;
But when the soft warm coral of her lips
Was to the wound apply'd, from ev'ry part
The hurried spirits crowded; soul and sense
Were centred there, and all my frame beside
Was but a rigid monumental form.—
Oh perfect happiness!—Such full content
Complete and absolute!—I could have died.—

Elf. No, live and love, and make Elfrida blest,
Who knows nor joy nor earthly good without thee.

Her only name for happiness is Ethelbert.—
 And, more to glad thee, see this gallant stranger,
 He brings thee welcome tidings.

Mess. I am come,
 To tell my lord he reigns again in Anglia.
 Ardulf, triumphant o'er the foe, by me,
 Greets thee, and bids thee haste, with best dispatch
 To join thy force to his, which ev'ry hour
 Swells with new levies.

Ethel. Now I am indeed
 A monarch. Twice, to brave and loyal Ardulf,
 Stand I indebted for a crown. Elfrida,
 Said I not hope and smiling days should yet
 Await us?

Ebba. Arm, my lord, a pow'rful band
 Approaches; if mine eye deceives me not,
 'Tis their chief is Mercia's king.

S C E N E VI.

Enter, to them, OFFA, with JUSTUS and ATTENDANTS.

Offa. Ye gallant Saxons,
 Prepare not for defence. No hostile purpose
 Is mine. I come a messenger of peace,
 O prince, you see a royal suppliant here,
 Who work'd thee cruel wrong; but happier thou,
 The injur'd, than th' injurious; for the wound

Of guilt will prove intolerable, unless
 Thy pardon heal. Lower to thee I bend,
 Than Offa thought, he ever should to man.
 But, next to virtue pure, 'tis nobleness
 To mourn a fault, and seek, by reparation,
 To cancel past offences.

Ethel. O my father,
 For, by that dear and venerable name,
 I now may call thee, bend not thus to me,
 Whom best the posture suits, thy son, by duty
 As by the ties of dear and fond alliance.
 My pardon—rather say my gratitude.
 Past seeming wrongs as benefits appear,
 That swell and double thus the present joy.

Offa. My child, Elfrida, fear not now my curse,
 For converse held with Ethelbert. Thy father,
 By this embrace, absolves thee. Smiling days
 And mutual love await you. I am come,
 To join the plighted hands, and faithful hearts,
 I vainly strove to sever. I have wak'd
 As from an horrid dream; and now I loath
 My own ambition. On the precipice,
 My foot was timely stay'd. Unhappy Bertha
 Rush'd furious on, and perish'd in th' abyss.

Ethel. What?—Perish'd say'st thou?—When?—How?—Righteous heav'n!

Offa. Yes; Bertha is no more.—But think not of her,
 It were a tale too dreadful for thine ear;

Nor could I bear it ; 'twould, with grief renew'd,
 Convulse my heart.—Now, let us fix our eyes
 On bright and smiling prospects. All my wish
 Is to repair the past. With homeward steps,
 Ev'n now, my troops from Anglia bend their march.
 And whatsoever wrongs thy people felt,
 In person or possession, from their inroad,
 Be tenfold recompens'd.

Elf. Yes, I do wake.—

My words by wonder, doubt, and fear suppress
 At last find way.—My father, o my father,
 Best, dearest, kindest.—On her knees, Elfrida
 Blesses, and thanks thee ; thanks with gushing tears—
 But not of grief.—O I have much endur'd !
 But this, this goodness, over-pays it all.

Offa. Rise, daughter ; king of Anglia, take her hand.
 The heav'ns rain blessings on you, that your joys
 May be proverbial, and succeeding times,
 When they would carry benediction high,
 As human voice can utter, to their darlings
 May say, “ be happy, as the gentle prince
 “ That wedded Offa's daughter.” May your children
 Cling round these knees, when failing age, from war,
 And manly sports, shall hold me prisoner,
 Play with my silver beard, and, with their prattle,
 Deceive the weary hours of life's decline.

Elf. Ah me for pity ! wretched that I am !
 Look up, my lord, oh he is sick to death !

Unusual chillness seizes him ; his brow
 Is cold and damp ; his face is deadly pale.—
 Oh let me chafe thy hands in mine ; and bid
 The genial warmth return.—Come, sit thee down ;
 On thine Elfrida's faithful breast recline
 Thy gentle head.—Help, help !—Oh heav'n, he faints :

Ethel. It is too late. The dart, that pierc'd my arm,
 Was dipt in poison. Pangs, fierce burning pangs,
 Throb eager at the wound, convulse my frame,
 And shake my lab'ring heart.—I pant—I gasp—

Elf. Oh sounds of horror.—Not the volley'd fire,
 Darted from angry heav'n ; not rocking earth,
 Trembling and heaving, with her inborn flame,
 Would so confound me. But thou shalt not die,—
 Or if thou must, yet, stay for thine Elfrida !
 I feel the venom too.—My soul stands plum'd,
 To share thy flight ennobled and complete,
 This hour shall crown our loves ; for, at my heart
 The busy poison works.

Ethel. Oh talk not thus.—
 Now death has stings, indeed.—Thy tears and cries,
 Thy parting agonies, unman my heart.
 Angels, that hover round us, sooth her grief,
 Bring heav'nly balm and healing on your wings,
 Shade her from fierce impatience and despair.—
 Ah little does she know the rending pangs,
 That throb and agonize in ev'ry nerve,—

[*aside.*

Insufferable torments !—How the streams
Of molten lead devour my vitals up !—
My blood is flaming sulphur, my parch'd lips
A glowing furnace ; and my fiery breath
A blasting exhalation !—Oh death, death,
Wilt thou not fold me in thine icy arms ?—

Offa. My child, Elfrida, to thy heart speak comfort.

Elf. Comfort !—I know not, now, what comfort means.
The day is close shut in, and now, for night,
A dread and gloomy night bedew'd with gore.
See here, see here.—Thou hast destroy'd a youth,
Whose single worth the kings of earth outweighs.

Offa. 'Tis just, o god, 'tis just, I bear all this !
All this, and more.—These are my fatal works.
'Tis fit, I should become the veriest wretch,
That ever crawl'd and agoniz'd on earth ;
Stript of my grandeur by th' usurper's hand ;
Despis'd and abject ! Give me, o ye pow'rs,
A strong enduring heart, and patience firm,
To bear my lot of torments, which shall rise,
If justice dwells above, o'er human woes,
To reach a height stupendous as my crimes !

Ethel. Be patient, king,—thy sorrow comes too late.
Th' almighty doom is pass'd. It was decreed,
That Ethelbert should fall. But, for my sake,—
'Tis all th' atonement thou can'st make my shade,
Be kind to poor Elfrida !—At the pass

'Twere vain to murmur. Earthly things have lost
 Their influence o'er my soul. Here I am weak—
 And here alone. Fairer to me thou seem'st,
 As at this solemn hour, I gaze my last,
 Than, in the soft enchanted days of peace,
 When first I lov'd thee!—Feel my bursting heart;
 It throbs within my breast to blend with thine!—
 My pangs are fled, a sweet and blessed calm
 My being melts in gentle languishment.

Elf. I am not thunder struck. I still can speak,
 And gaze abroad, and see my wretchedness.—
 My Ethelbert, —he's fled—he answers not.—
 Fled, like a vision,—but I am resign'd.—
 My love thou art at rest—o when shall death?—

Ethel. That tuneful voice recall'd my parting soul.—
 Farewell—but not for ever.—Gracious heav'n!
 Sure, we shall meet,—and yet I am—thou know'st—
 Heav'n, heav'n, receive and bless.—This heart—farewell.
 The grave's deep silence shall send forth a voice—

[Dies.

*ELFRIDA, after gazing a long time on Ethelbert, as she stands
 over his body, with folded arms, sits down on the earth.*

Here will I sit, a monument of woe,
 Which men shall come to gaze upon with wonder.
 I will not share my proud ambitious grief,

Ev'n with the noblest of the race. My sighs
 In distant solitary pomp shall heave ;
 For never sorrow had so great a theme,
 So full, so fair, so high. Break, break, my heart,
 Sooner than spare an atom of thy freight.
 Here is a pang that scorns the aid of words,
 And groans and cries, the common forms of grief. —
 Silence shall speak it best, these rigid nerves,
 Eyes fix'd, and limbs unmov'd, but chiefly death. —
 Earth reels and staggers ;—down a depth immense,
 I sink---I sink---commix'd in giddy whirls,
 How all things round me swim in formless mist !
 Eyes gaze your last—crack eyestrings—and break heart.—
 'Tis past—'tis done—receive me, Ethelbert !

[Dies.]

Justus. Why is the barren tribute of a tear,
 All I can pay to love and innocence ?
 Estrang'd from human life, and all its cares,
 In calm religion's port, this sight of woe
 To mortal sorrows drags me back again,
 Renews the warmth and bleeding sympathy
 Of early life. Restrain thy tears, o king ;
 They flow in vain.

Offa. And therefore 'tis they flow.
 I am a wretch, indeed, abandon'd most
 Of every guardian pow'r. Yet am I firm
 'Midst fiercest pangs. I wonder at myself,
 That reason keeps her hold, with eyes unmov'd,

To view the mischiefs I have caus'd,—the wreck
 Of all most noble, amiable, and good,
 In human-kind, by these accursed hands.—
 My sweet Elfrida, in the flow'r and prime
 Of bloomy youth. The gentle Ethelbert,
 The boast of Britain's isle !—What force withholds
 This rash unhappy hand, that, with a blow,
 It should not break the cords of misery,
 That strain me on the rack, and bid me sleep ?

Justus. Forbear, o monarch ; such desponding words
 Disparage manhood, and renounce the duty
 Thy subjects challenge. 'Twere a bold rebellion
 Against thy maker. Wouldst thou kill thy mind,
 With all her eagle brood of noble aims ?
 Let works of mercy, piety, and peace
 Redeem thy guilt ; and thou shalt be forgiv'n.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

LETTER TO A FRIEND,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

SAXON PRINCES.

THE dramatic piece, which accompanies this letter, was the production of an early part of my life; it lay long covered with the dust of oblivion; and was remembered, only, to be destroyed; had not the interference of a friend redeemed it, from the flames; and persuaded me to revise it, for the public eye. I state this simply, to account for the many faults which will be found in the Saxon Princes; not to extenuate them: I know, it wants the bustle and intrigue, so necessary to the modern drama; I know, that many of the speeches may be thought declamatory, diffuse, and languid; but I flatter myself, it contains a purity of sentiment, and a strain of morality, which, with a candid reader, will hide a multitude of sins; and sufficiently plead the author's excuse for preserving, and publishing, this drama.

You have criticised my production, with a friendly severity; for which I thank you; and, to show what deference I pay to your opinions, and how attentively I weigh every thing which falls from you, I shall try, *impar congressus Achilli*, to answer your objections.--- They are four in number.

Your first and, in my mind, most formidable objection is, that Bertha has too near a resemblance to the Alicia of Rowe, in *Jane Shore*; there may, perhaps, be some casual traits of resemblance, but I plead not guilty, to the charge of imitation. The range of human actions is boundless; but, amidst the great variety of actions, the number of those, which have sufficient strength and energy, to catch the eye, to stand out and become striking points of view; in other words, to yield interesting stage situations, is confined indeed. If we were to prohibit the writers of the present day, from employing any characters or incidents, which had been touched by their predecessors, all new dramatic productions must be at an end. The conflict of passion is the favourite engine of tragedy; the situation of a mind torn at once by love, jealousy, and a sense of duty repugnant to both, as it is highly pitiable, in real life, so, is it extremely affecting, in stage representation; such a situation was naturally suggested by my subject; and, I adopted it, without the smallest reference to any other dramatic performance. As to single speeches, or individual lines, I cannot charge my memory with any taints of plagiarism. I know that the introduction of madness has fallen into some discredit, and perhaps justly. A mad scene has been a kind of bow of Ulysses, in which every tragic writer, great and small, who wished to produce a rant, has tried his strength; yet, what is more natural, than privation of reason, under violent agitations of mind? And, what is better calculated, to produce, in stage representation, the dramatic effects of terror and pity? The scene of madness in the *Saxon Princes* is very short, as mad scenes always should be, and you will allow, that it is prepared with more probability, than mad scenes usually are; as Bertha is supposed to have swallowed poison, and to be near her end; so that the deleterious effects of an envenomed drug, and the approach of death, almost invariably productive, in themselves, of insanity, concur with the intolerable feelings of a violent, a criminal, and remorseful mind.

Your second objection is more minute, and in the spirit of severe criticism.—That Bertha is introduced, as having in her possession a portrait of Ethelbert; which, you assert, to be a violation of the costume, as, most probably, miniature pictures were wholly unknown, at the period, in which, the subject matter of my play is supposed to have happened: but, if you will look into the history of the arts, at the time

of the saxon heptarchy*, you will find, that painting and sculpture were not then unknown, or unpractised; and, that being the case, it was both possible and probable that Bertha might have in her possession a portrait of Ethelbert; and, a probable possibility is all that poetry requires.

Another, and more serious, objection is to the character of Offa: his irresolution, and frequent change of his determinations may be considered, as a violation of that rule, which the dramatic poet should ever have before his eyes, when he undertakes, to paint characters; qualis ab incepto processerit, aut sibi constet.---Never, say you, was man of so stern a character, so fickle and undecided.---Let us see, whether Offa, as I have drawn him, may not be defended.---The rule is in the alternative---Let each person either act in a manner perfectly consistent throughout the drama; or let the changes in his conduct, and variations from that line of action, in which, at first outset, the spectator or reader might reasonably expect him to persevere, be consistent with the general outline, and leading features, which the poet has assigned him; and, let them be so fully accounted for, by the operation of extrinsic causes and agents, that the very deviations from the predominant character shall be the result of itself, and variation, analysed and rightly understood, shall prove to be uniformity. To illustrate this rule, by the case of a departure from it, the Iphigenia in Aulis, of Euripides, is censured by Aristotle, for assuming an heroic fortitude and contempt of death, in the latter end of the play, inconsistent with the love of life and soft timid character, which the poet has attributed to her, in the beginning of the drama. Now, let us try the character of Offa, on this statute of criticism. Men of warm tempers, and strong passions are not always remarkable for steadiness of conduct. The uniformity of character, which presents for ever the same predominant feature, results from the excess of some one passion, and the absence of others. The disposition of the king of Mercia was not of this kind; he was not, decidedly swayed by one ruling passion; he was not a sanguinary tyrant, a mere savage warrior; he was a man of passions, violent indeed, but various, and many of his passions counteracted each other; he was fond to excess of his wife and of his daughter, whose

* Henry's History of England, Vol. I.

interests were inconsistent, and, who alternately influenced his conduct, with irresistible force; he was a prince, of great virtues, a lover of justice, humane, and religious, according to the fashion of the times; but he was hurried away by the dictates of an over-weening ambition, and, the fascinating idea of establishing an universal dominion over the saxon states; suppose all these contending emotions and inconsistent aims actuating the mind of man; and must they not produce, exactly, such an uncertainty of conduct, such contradictory resolves, such a fluctuating character, as I have attributed, I might more properly say, tradition and history have appropriated and attached to the king of Mercia. The Saxon Princes does, in fact, but draw into dialogue an historical relation, embellished with poetical language, and diversified with a few episodical circumstances. It actually appears, from history, that the king of East-Anglia resided at the court of Offa, as the intended husband of his daughter, that he was a young prince of great merit, and that he was basely murdered by him, at the instigation of his queen; it is not improbable, and, therefore, I have taken the liberty of supposing that this instigation proceeded from the fury of slighted love; it also appears, that Offa was struck with the deepest sorrow, and contrition, for the horrid deed he had committed; and endeavoured, to atone for it, by pilgrimages, penances, and other acts of piety, according to the bigotry of that superstitious age; and, particularly, by an unbounded liberality, to the church, which in those times, was supposed efficacious to hide a multitude of sins. Now, if his remorse, after having committed the crime, was so poignant, may we not reasonably conclude, that the struggles of conscience, which preceded it, were most severe?

Your last objection is, that Elfrida is supposed to suck the wound of Ethelbert, which, in your opinion, offends against probability, it being, as you contend, a thing physically impracticable, to suck a wound. Without examining the surgical weight of this objection, I shall fly, from the storm of criticism, to shelter myself under the venerable branches of history and tradition.--No--I will not answer you,--the Black prince shall rise from the dead, and lead his beloved Eleanor by the hand to answer you.

Adieu, my friend. It were as easy, to defend my play, with all its faults, as to justify the unwarrantable length of this epistle; yet, I have

two excuses to make, even for that ;—first, that by your seeming to take such an interest in my trifling productions, I am induced to trouble you often, and much ; secondly, that I take so much pleasure, in writing to you, that when I once begin a letter to you, I never know how to subscribe myself, your

affectionate friend,

W. P.

MESSENE FREED;

OR, THE

CRUEL VIRTUE,

TRAGEDY.

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ARGUMENT.

I FIND the argument of this drama ready made to my hand, in that elegant work of the abbe Barthelemi, entitled, the travels of Anacharsis; I shall therefore transcribe his words. "The Messenians enjoyed, during many ages, an undisturbed tranquillity, in a country, which sufficed to supply all their wants, and beneath the mild influence of a sky perpetually serene. They were free; they had wise laws, simple manners, kings, who loved their people, and joyous festivals to relax them after their labours."

"On a sudden, the alliance, by which they were united to the Lacedæmonians, received a mortal wound; the two states mutually accused each other, and menaces succeeded to complaints. Ambition, till then, enchained by the laws of Lycurgus, seized the moment to break his fetters, and loudly calling injustice and violence to his aid, entered into the hearts of the Spartans; and incited them, to swear on their altars, never to lay down their arms, till they had enslaved Messenia. The destructive passion, elated with his first success, led them to one of the summits of mount Taygetus, and shewing them the rich countries that lay before their eyes, introduced them into a fortified place, which belonged to their ancient allies, and served as a barrier to the two states."

"Euphaes was then on the throne; he listened to the advice of the chiefs of the nation; he excited the ardent courage of the Messenians; but restrained it, till it might be exerted with success. Whole years scarce sufficed, to enure to military discipline, a people, too long accustomed to the inert enjoyments of peace. In that interval, he learnt to see, without a murmur, his harvests destroyed by the Lacedæmonians."

"Twice, the moment of vengeance appeared to approach; twice, the forces of the two states met in the martial conflict; but victory dared

not yet to decide the important dispute, and her indecision accelerated the ruin of the Messenians. Their army was enfeebled from day to day, by the loss of a great number of warriors, by the garrisons which it was necessary to maintain in different places, by the desertion of slaves, and by an epidemical disease, which began its ravages in a country formerly so flourishing. In this extremity, it was resolved to entrench the army on mount Ithome, and to consult the oracle of Delphi. The priests, and not the gods, dictated the answer. The safety of Messenia, said they, depends on the sacrifice of a youthful maiden, drawn by lot, from among the reigning family on the throne.*

"Ancient prejudices blinded all eyes, to the atrocious crime of obeying such an injunction. The fatal urn was brought, and the lot condemned to death the daughter of Lyfiscus; but her father, suddenly withdrawing her from every eye, fled with her to Lacedemon. The warrior Aristodemus instantly advanced, and in despite of the tender affection, which remonstrated in his heart against the act, offered his own to the altar. She had been affianced to one of the favourites of the king, who ran to protect her. He went farther; to save her, he ventured even to cast an imputation on her innocence, and declared that the rites of Hymen had already been consummated. The horror of such a falsehood, the dread of dishonour, paternal love, the sanctity of his word, a multitude of contrary emotions, agitated, with such violence, the mind of Aristodemus, that the stroke of despair was necessary to afford him relief. He seized a ponyard, and his daughter fell dead at his feet, in the view of the shuddering spectators. The priest, unsated with blood, exclaimed,—"It was not piety, but madness, that guided the hand of the murderer; "the gods require another victim!" And another they shall have, replied the furious multitude, who immediately fell upon the wretched lover, whom they would have torn to pieces on the spot, had not the king appeased the tumult, and persuaded them, that the conditions of the oracle were fulfilled."

As to the part which Lyfiscus, his wife, and the priestess of Juno, take in the action of this drama, it is equally sanctioned by history, as appears from the following passages in Stanyan, vol. 1. page 71.—"The oracle demanded a virgin, for a sacrifice, of the family of Æpytus, the

* The house of Æpytus.

son of Cresphontes; and the lot fell upon the daughter of Lyfiscus; who being thought suppositious, Aristodemus offered his daughter.—Some years after Lyfiscus, who had fled to Sparta, with his daughter, where she died, was taken, and tried at Ithome, as a deserter; but was acquitted by the voluntary confession of the priestess of Juno's temple, who owned the child to be hers, and that she had secretly conveyed it to Lyfiscus's wife; wherein she was easily credited; because, by this confession, she could propose nothing less than the immediate forfeiture of her priesthood."

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

M E N.

EUPHAES, King of Messene.

ARISTODEMUS, }
LYSISCUS, } Principal Messenians of the house of
 Æpytus.

EPHEBOLUS, Priest of Apollo.

PHILOCLÉS, Son to Lysiscus.

ALCANDER, a young Messenian, friend to Philocles.

TISIS, a person sent to consult the oracle at Delphos.

W O M E N.

TECMESSA, Wife to Lysiscus, and Mother to Anthemoe.

EVADNE, Priestess of Juno.

DIONE, Daughter to Aristodemus.

ANTHEMOE, reputed Daughter to Lysiscus.

Besides these, there is a train of VIRGINS, who appear in the processions of PRIESTS and CHORISTERS, of the family of Æpytus and of other Messenians.

The scene is laid in Ithome, the capital of Messene.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Ithome.—An area, surrounded by magnificent structures : on the one hand, the Temple of Diana ; on the other, the Temple of Apollo.

EUPHAES, ARISTODEMUS, LYSISCUS,
and others of the principal Messenians, as in council.

EUPHAES.

FRIENDS, we are met, to try what healing counsels,
The hard necessity of this dread moment
To wisdom may suggest ; for sure 'twill task
Wisdom and courage both, with steady hand,
To guide the lab'ring vessel thro' the billows
That strain her sides, and, to devour her, ope

A fathomless abyfs. What sacrifice,
What pray'rs, what rites, avert the threaten'd ills?

Lyf. More easy were it, to describe and mourn
Those ills, that all without distinction feel,
Than to devise their cure; all offer'd terms
Of peace are vain; for, with unfated rage
Of enmity, which ever keenest burns
In kindred bosoms alienate, the Spartan
Thirsts for Messene's downfall.

Arif. Terms of peace!
Perish the word and thought! and doubly perish
The dastard spirit, that would bid Messene,
In vile humiliation, stoop to Sparta,
And humbly sue for bonds! far other weight
Our hands have learn'd to bear, the lance, and sword
Bright gleaming on the foe.—Behold the helots,
And sue for terms to Sparta.—They will tell you,
What from the justice and the moderation
Of Sparta you may hope.

Euph. Recall to mind,
Not distant is the day, Amphea's fate.
The spartan sword without compassion rag'd,
Of sex or age. Not then the hallow'd shrines
Sav'd their pale suppliants; ev'n the smoaking altars
Where clouds of incense wreath'd, were grasp'd in vain.
In vain the infant to his mother's breast
For safety clung; the ruffian tore him thence,
And dash'd him on the ground, and in the dust

Trampled his little limbs; or with his parent
 Wounded and fainting, to the ground he fell,
 And grov'ling near, and seeking from her breast
 The wonted nutriment, he drain'd for milk
 Life's purple stream, and all his little lips
 With gore were crimson'd.

Ephēb. By the flowing locks,
 Virgins were dragg'd to outrage. Oft the blood
 Of a slain sire, or brother, stain'd and clotted
 The daughters comely tresses. At the altar,
 Loving and lov'd, the youth and virgin fell
 Lock'd in each others arms, and with one spear
 Transfix'd.

Arif. Here, let us join our plighted hands,
 And swear that we will know nor peace, nor truce,
 With those fell spartan dogs; nor sheath the sword
 Till Neda's stream flow red with hostile gore.

Lyf. Thy warmth is virtuous, brave Aristodemus,
 I feel as thou dost. Who, that loves his country,
 Feels not and execrates the cruel wrongs,
 Of sanguinary Sparta? But thy words
 Sound rather the fierce gloom of desperation,
 Than settled courage, which the rays of hope
 Guide to its aim. What hope for poor Messene,
 With force unequal 'gainst a mighty foe,
 Fierce and relentless, and by opposition,
 And wounded pride, to hate incurable
 Goaded contending? Ev'n the elements

Are leagued with Sparta. Thro' the groaning air,
 Pernicious demons urge the lurid blast,
 With red infection charg'd. On man and beast
 Falls the dire influence; and the plague consumes
 What sword and famine spare. Night after night,
 Terrific portents fill th' inclement sky;
 And sanguine meteors roll their crimson waves,
 Crowding and trembling, thro' the turbid vault
 Of congregated vapours.

Euph. Hear ye not

The sullen murmurs of the famish'd crowds,
 That sink in deep despair?—In vain to heav'n
 Their eyes are cast: impenetrable gloom
 Drawn o'er, a fatal curtain, seems outspread
 On purpose, to depress the soul of man,
 With thoughts of wrath divine; while, from his sight,
 It snatches, with the light, the hopes of heav'n,
 And to his dark and drooping soul presents
 Unvaried sadness.

Arif. Let the elements

Contend, and meteors glare, and portents low'r
 Dismay to feeble souls; the manly mind
 Holds its fix'd aim; and from itself alone,
 From the bright portion of the god in man,
 Derives its auguries. Let heav'n in wrath
 Chastise the nations; virtue steers her course
 Unterrified; she knows that wrath divine
 Burns not for her; she knows the elements

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Rage not at virtue ; that th' almighty arm
That launch'd the comet thro' th' eternal void,
Or kindled meteors in the troubled sky,
Sends not his terrors forth, to scare the soul
From wise and noble aim, or patriot deed.

Lyf. But how shall they, whom dire calamity,
Whether from wrath divine, or fickle chance,
It matters not, hath humbled in the dust,
Low as the trampled worm, with spirit elate,
Danger, and doubt, and, death, and worse than all,
Endure the wreck of every charity,
That sweetens human life. Each tender pledge
Cries out for peace.—“ Oh shall the warrior's virtue,
“ Rugged and stern, the milder duties chase
“ Of fire and husband ? Will ye see us dragg'd,
“ And butcher'd at the altars ?—Happy they
“ Who meet such fate ! and wretched who survive
“ To bondage or dishonour !—Will ye bear,
“ To see your houses, erst the calm abodes
“ Of sweet domestic comfort, wrapt in fire ?—
“ To see the walls, where festive rite and dance,
“ And nuptial hymn, resounded, late, and joy,
“ In ruins tumbled by the foes entomb
“ Their miserable owners ?”

Euph. Good Lyfiscus,
Thy words may challenge weight. The spirit of man
Must fail contending with the varied ills,
That urge this groaning land. Our peasants, slain,

Manure the plains they till'd ; while thro' our streets,
 With pallid visages, like corsees wak'd
 From death, their cearments burst, expiring throngs
 Emaciate glide ; and scowl with horrid looks
 Of deadly consternation ; and in vain,
 Stript by the spoiler, cry for food and raiment.

Lyf. And cry in vain.—The hand of dire disease
 Hath smote the gen'ral heart ; and turn'd to stone
 The tender nature. Offices of good,
 And pious thoughts, and mercy, and compassion,
 Are vanish'd all, with our prosperity.
 Infuriate with a sense of wrath divine,
 And hopeless of relief, within these walls
 Infectious pent, the wretched people fall.
 Our ways are heap'd with death ; the slave and noble
 Sink undistinguish'd. All our springs are choak'd
 With livid corsees ; and our hallow'd shrines
 Are fill'd with death obscene.

Euph. Propitious heav'n,
 Avert these suff'rings ! or at least reveal
 Their fatal cause.

Ephob. With trembling hope, we wait
 The sacred mandate from Apollo's shrine.
 Tifis, to whom in charge 'twas giv'n to seek
 The shrine at Delphos, and with hallow'd awe
 Explore the will divine, must soon return.

Euph. When Tifis parted hence, the pointed horns
 Of Cynthia's silver bow to the westward turn'd ;

Now, chang'd, with adverse aim, to th' east they point;
Yet still he lingers.

SCENE II.

Enter, to them, PHILOCLES.

Lyf. O, my Philocles,
What bring'st thou from the camp, where stern in arms
Our chosen youth, Messene's last resource,
Await the spartan rage?

Phil. All yet is still;
A formidable pause, of rising storms
Presageful. From the chain of hills, that bound
The hated soil of hostile Lacedemon,
To reedy Pamifus,* encamp our bands,
Ten thousand warriors; and, with beating hearts,
Expect their monarch's presence.

Arif. Why, young man,
At such a moment, when the thoughts of war
All other cares should chase, desert the camp,
Smit with the love of home, and soft delights,
That in a city reign?

* Pamifus, a river of Messene.

Phil. Spare the reproach,

By me unmerited, who seek to prove,
 Tho' not thy son by blood, thy son by worth,
 And heir, by imitation, of thy virtues.
 But, in this interval, while yet the sword
 Sleeps in its sheath, methinks a son or brother,
 Without disgrace, may one soft moment spare
 For nature and affection; to the camp
 He bears the last embrace, the parting sighs,
 Adieus half murmur'd, gentle tears, and feelings
 Of tender clasps soft-straining, from the females
 Belov'd at home, his surest strong incitement,
 To deeds of hardihood.

Arif. Think not, good youth,
 I hold thy valour cheap;—the gods forbid.
 But, all my ardent soul is fill'd with rage,
 Impatient of restraint, when I revolve
 The woes of poor Messene, and the pride
 Of fierce usurping Sparta.

Euph. In the camp
 What hope of good prevails? What temper reigns?
Phil. Small hope of good prevails among our bands.
 A deep resolve and formidable gloom
 Dwells in their spirits, which in warlike flame
 Shall on the invaders burst, more quick and fatal
 Than lightning from the deep and sombrous womb
 Of low-hung clouds. Each soldier holds himself
 The single victim for the gen'ral host.

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Sisters,
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Euph. Such temper must prevail. Proud Lacedemon
 Shall feel us yet.—Propitious gods remove
 Those ills, we suffer; those we fear, avert.
 Ours is the righteous cause; we draw the sword,
 To guard your fanes, your altars, and the ties,
 The dear relations, you yourselves ordain,
 The tender pledges, you yourselves have giv'n.—
 But lo, with warbled hymns, and awful strain
 Of pious minstrelsy, our children come.
 Sweet virgin innocence! the heav'nly pow'rs
 Smile on you, maidens, and receive your pray'rs.

S C E N E III.

DIONE and ANTHEMOE,

With other messenian virgins, robed in white, appear in solemn procession, with chaplets of flowers on their heads, and baskets of flowers in their hands. They strew flowers on the stage and sing the following

H Y M N.

Sisters, at this awful hour,
 Call on ev'ry virgin pow'r.
 Virgins, with indulgent ear,
 Will the vows of virgins hear.

Virgin off'rings here we strew,
 Flowrets bath'd in morning dew,
 Emblems of our humble state,
 Soft, and frail, and short their date;
 Nor celestial pow'rs demand
 Other off'rings at our hand;
 Costly vases from the mine,
 Perfumes wreathing from the shrine,
 Suit not with our scanty pow'r,
 With the sad distressful hour.
 Should we victims bring, with gore
 To bedew the sacred floor?—
 Sanguine sights and sounds of pain
 Scare the feeble female train.—
 Sisters, at this awful hour
 Call on ev'ry virgin pow'r.

Never yet irrev'rent found
 From our lips a passage found.
 To preserve them pure and chaste,
 Virgin naiads, hither haste.
 Peneus, let thy waters chill
 Gently on my lips distil.
 Sisters, at this awful hour,
 Call on ev'ry virgin pow'r.

Hither haste, aonian maids,
 Leave the fountains, leave the shades,

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Where, ye tune the vocal shell,
 Where, with bright-hair'd Phœbus dwell,
 Where, ye touch your golden strings,
 Temper'd to the warbling springs.
 Fill our bosoms with your fire,
 Raptures waken, songs inspire,
 Strains, to melt the pow'rs above,
 Sounds, to reach the throne of Jove.
 Hither haste, aonian throng,
 Queens of minstrelsy and song.

Goddeſs of the ſilver bow,
 From virgin lips the numbers flow ;---
 Where ſtern Laconia feeds her hounds,
 On Taygetus, the horn reſounds ;---
 Eurotas calls, with eager pace,
 Seek his banks, and urge the chace.
 Laconia is thy fav'rite land,
 Yet, wilt thou ſcorn the virgin band ?
 To thee we gave our harmleſs days,
 Our lips have duly ſung thy praiſe,
 And, as we ſung, devoutly pray'd,
 Hear thy vot'ries, huntreſs maid :---
 Virgin huntreſs, Dian, hear ;
 Stooping from thy ſilver ſphere,
 Fill thy quiver, bend thy bow,
 Send thine arrows on the foe.
 Laconia is thy fav'rite land,
 Yet, wilt thou ſcorn the virgin band ?

Warlike maid, we bend to thee,
 Queen of arms and liberty,
 Queen of wisdom, queen of arts,
 Taming, soothing savage, hearts.
 Crowding myriads, at thy call,
 Mark the street, and raise the wall.
 Leagues of peace and nuptial ties
 Thrive, and spread beneath thine eyes.
 Tho' learned Athens be thy care,
 Thy presence let Messene share.
 Thine Ægis o'er Ithome spread,
 And fill th' invader's soul with dread ;
 For valiant are her modest youth,
 Adorn'd with piety and truth ;
 And with her gentle female train
 The graces and decorums reign ;
 Warlike maid, we bend to thee
 Queen of arms and liberty,
 Tho' learned Athens be thy care,
 Thy presence let Messene share.

Euph. Enough, my daughters, sure the virgin pow'rs
 Will hear the strain, and smile upon your Off'rings ;
 Off'rings befitting virgins, sweet tho' humble.
 But other gifts th' offended gods may claim.—
 Haply, in expiation of our crimes,
 Victims must fall, and blood of hecatombs

Around their altars smoak, from Delphi soon
 Our envoy will return.—Unwittingly
 Have we offended; and unwittingly
 Delay th' atonement.—O ye pitying gods,
 Reveal your awful will, and 'tis perform'd.

*Euphaes, Ephebolus, and Lysiscus, with the virgins, in procession, retire to the bottom of the stage, the scene closes on them;
 Aristodemus and Philocles remain.*

S C E N E IV.

ARISTODEMUS and PHILOCLES.

As DIONE retires with the virgins, PHILOCLES stands gazing after her for a considerable time, then speaks.

May ev'ry guardian pow'r of truth and virtue [aside.
 Preserve thee, fairest flow'r of virgin prime!
 O queen of charms, and mighty god of love;
 If ye indeed are deities, and not
 The soul of beauty o'er the world diffus'd
 And sense to feel it in the mind of man;
 To you my vows be paid; devote and whole,
 My heart is giv'n to you; for at my birth,

When nature mix'd and temper'd with my clay
 The elements of passion, first, and chief,
 Was love infus'd, and I but think and breathe
 For thee Dione.—O lov'd native soil,
 Pardon thy recreant child ; for in this heart
 Midst all the terrors that besiege thee round,
 Thou hold'st but second place.

Arif. Attend young man.

I love thee, and I therefore prize thy fame,
 As dearly as mine own.—The gods were pleas'd
 To take mine only son, in early youth.
 I since have made thee, by adoption, mine.
 My care hath been to form thy growing mind,
 By precept and example ; and from me,
 I trust, my Philocles, that thou hast learn'd
 No lessons of dishonour.—Say, my son,
 Why hast thou left the camp ?—Before thy king,
 I spar'd to urge thee ; but my soul was pain'd,
 At thy return ; 'twas a soft, boyish, act.—
 Thou must redeem it, and depart this hour.

Pbi. Depart this hour ?

Arif. Why dost thou echo me ?—

This very hour.—

Phil. A lov'd and gentle sister
 May claim a last embrace ; my tender parents,
 That wait to fold me in their rev'rend arms,
 Some space may claim, to shed their parting tears ;

To breathe a fervent blessing, as I go,—
 Perhaps for ever,—from them, and infuse,
 On my young breast, the monitory words
 Of pious love.—And is a single hour
 Sufficient?—Were I bent, but on a journey
 Of common import, not address'd for war,
 Where haply I may fall, more time and ceremony
 The voice of nature, speaking thro' the lips
 Of parent and of sister, might demand.

Arif. Of parent and of sister!—is this all?
 Beware, young man; no falshood or disguise,
 With him that loves thee, or I cast thee off.—
 A parent and a sister! is there not
 A softer tie, that winds around thy heart,
 And steals thee from thyself?—Youth is deceiv'd,
 That thinks the aged blind; old eyes are sharp,
 When wakeful fondness, and parental care
 Purge, as with euphrasy, the visual nerve.

Phil. Oh look not sternly, thus. Thine eye severe
 To silence awes me.—Well then, with thy patience,
 I will unfold my heart.—It loves Dione.
 Already, by th' endearing name of son
 You make me yours; and might the sacred tie
 Of hymeneal rite.—

Arif. Forbear, young man;
 Another time, perhaps, these ears would gladly
 Hear thy fond tale of love. 'Tis not an hour,
 For bridal revelry; when pestilence,

Within Ithome, heaps the dead and dying,
 And waisting war without. All hopes of joy
 And schemes of pleasure, now, are public crimes ;
 An insult on the gen'ral misery.
 Hymen, in blood of slaughter'd citizens,
 Would stain his saffron robes, and quench his torch,
 And fly affrighted. All the gods, averse,
 Would view the ceremony ; and ill omens,
 The sounds of anguish, and the groans of death,
 The nuptial rites disturb. Say, wouldst thou take
 A bride, to generate a race of slaves,
 For tyrant Sparta ?——

Phil. Gods, a mad'ning thought !
 Death, death, to love's fond hopes !—Ye lions, tigers,
 Lend me your fierceness. Wolves of Menalus,
 Lend me your rage, to bathe in spartan gore.

Arif. Well said, my son. This temper aptly suits
 Th' eventful crisis. Let the thoughts of war
 And Sparta's cruelty confirm thy soul,
 To live, by glorious victory, a freeman,
 Or perish free. Most sure, thou wert not born,
 Much less, by me adopted, to become
 A despicable helot.—Answer not.—
 Thy deeds must be thine eloquence, the sword
 Thine advocate, to woo, and win my daughter.
 Messene freed, we shall bestow the virgin,
 As heav'n shall guide our choice.

Phil. Blest be that ray
Of hope! I hail it, as a dawning light,
That guides my path to fame. I will attempt
Things beyond human strength, to prove myself
Thy son indeed. But wilt thou not indulge
A last embrace, a few brief parting words,
With those I love?

Arist. O think not, Philocles,
My heart compos'd of flinty elements;
Tho' stern I wear my brow, and sometimes chide;
It feels, as thine doth, hears the tender calls
Of sweet domestic life; but these sad times
Of dire necessity impose a curb
On human meltings. Go, then, to thy parents,
And sister; but be prompt, in thine adieus.
The camp expects thee — Shouldst thou meet Dione,
Be frugal of thy speech, and wait the time,
When happier omens and a father's sanction
Shall bid thee freely speak.

Phil. I must obey.

[*Exeunt, severally, Aristodemus, and Philocles.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A retired grove adjoining the Temple of Apollo, where the preceding scenes passed. The Temple is seen in perspective.

Enter DIONE and ANTHEMOE.

DIONE.

OH, my Anthemoe, may the pitying gods
Receive our supplications ! * what have we,
Or what our parents, done, to draw from heav'n
Such chastisement severe ?

Anth. My feeble heart
Sinks in me, to behold the varied ills
That round besiege us ; war and pestilence,
With all their dreadful train.—And then, Dione,
When thought prefaceful thro' the future looks,
From worse to worst, the horrors, which, they say,
Attend on cities storm'd ; the dismal wreck
Of all that's sacred in th' esteem of man,

* Alluding to the procession and religious rites, from which they are supposed to be just returned.

Of all that's venerable, tender, dear,
In social life. All outrag'd by the hand
Of hate unnatural!

Dio. Yet to fairer hopes
Erect thy spirit;—Tifis will return,
And from the delphic oracle reveal
Cure of these evils. My presaging heart
Tells me he brings glad tidings.

Anth. Grant it, gods!
Oh grant us many many happy days
Of lasting friendship, and of liberty!
Say, my Dione, could we ever bear
To live the slaves of Sparta?

Dio. No, Anthemoe,
Tho' death is dreadful to a woman's thought,
Yet would I give my bosom to the sword,
And like a victim at the altar bleed,
Ere live a slave.

Anth. And I would bleed, with thee
The sharer of my thoughts, component part,
In every wish and scheme of happiness.

Dio. Say, my Anthemoe, shall the happy days
Of childhood sports and charming indolence
Again return,—when we have led the dance
Near crystal Pamifus, and bath'd our limbs
In the soft yielding lymph, or cropt the flow'rs
That, with their lively hues, diversify'd
His banks, our archetypes, which, emulous,

The loom should rival, while in festive song
The hours uncounted flew?—

Anth. Yes, my Dione,

We shall again pursue our youthful sports.—

But, while the future thus employs our thoughts,

The present hath escap'd us. 'Tis most strange

That Philocles delays the dear embrace,

Fraternal; he was ever kind and gentle;

And since our dawn of infant thoughts could first

Objects distinguish, have we lov'd each other.—

And then, a tie still softer, and a love

Still more commanding;—wherefore dost thou blush?

Dio. Ev'n when alone, amidst the shades of night,

The name of love will call the ready blood,

To mantle on my cheek.—But, as thou say'st,

'Tis strange thy brother comes not.—Yet, Anthemoe,

I wish not for his coming. Dian, witness,

I fear it rather.—Wherefore should I fear?—

For he is kind and gentle; and his eye,

Encount'ring mine, will sink with modest awe,

As fearful of offending.—Let us chuse

Some other theme, for, why or how I know not,

Our talk, whene'er we meet, will turn on Philocles.

Anth. And why not turn on him?—A virtuous love

Beseems the chastest bosom.—Is not love

With altars grac'd, and as a god ador'd,

Ev'n by the best and wisest, to evince

His nature heav'nly, and his pow'r divine

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Gen'ral ordain'd for all that move and live.—

I know you love my brother.

Dio. For thy sake,

I love thy gentle brother, sweet Anthemoe.

Anthe. The heav'ns alone, these woods and sylvan pow'rs,
And love and Venus, hear our words :—confess,
Not for my sake alone doth Philocles—
Nay blush not—find a place in that soft bosom.

Dio. What shall I say ? Or what shall I confess ?
Ev'n from myself I fain would hide my thoughts.
Yet I will own, I feel not as I wont.

Our tasks of pleasant labour, fields and flow'rs,
And fragrant breeze at eve, and matin song
Of early birds, delight not now ; I feel
A void within my soul ; but 'tis not love.—
A virgin may not love.

Anthe. Venus forefend !

Are we not born to love, and to be lov'd ?
An happy nuptial is the chosen blessing
Our tender parents, in the hour of fondness,
Breathe for us to the gods.

Dio. Pleas'd in myself,
My father, and in thee, I scarce have look'd
Beyond the present moment.—Yet, in thought,
I sometimes plan to pass my quiet days,
Unknown and solitary.—Virgin goddess,
Oft have I pray'd, that I might consecrate,
In thy wild chaces and thy woodland haunts,

To thee, whatever space the ruling pow'rs,
That keep the issues of our life and death,
Of being lend me.—Let me fly!—alas,
Thy brother comes.

S C E N E II.

Enter, to them, PHILOCLUS.

Phil. O pardon me, my sister,
And thou, Dione, sister of my heart,
That thus my feet have linger'd, while my soul
And eager wishes flew to clasp you both
To this fraternal bosom.

Anth. Two long hours
Return'd, and in Ithome; and forget
To seek thy poor Anthemoe!—And this maid
Might challenge some regard.—Did'st thou not mark
Her fond solicitude, when, emulous
Of deathless fame that waits th' olympian olive,
Thou soughtst the banks of Alpheus?

Phil. Oh, my sister,
I merit not these chidings; the remembrance
Of ev'ry precious pledge I left behind,

Spite of myself recall'd me, I have snatch'd
 A few short moments, to embrace our parents ;
 Then, shall I own it ? A still dearer care
 My heart-strings touch'd, and bursting from their arms,
 That held me, grasp'd in kind imprisonment,
 I hither fled.

Anth. O may the gracious gods
 Protect thee, for thy parents and thy sister !
 And, if thou lov'st some fair and gentle maid,
 Protect thee for that maiden.—My Dione,
 Why thus avert thy face ? Hast thou no welcome,
 For thine adopted brother ?

Dio. O ye gods, [aside.
 Much more than brother !—Yes, Anthemoe,
 Most welcome is thy brother.—All the gods
 Prosper thy coming, Philocles.

Phil. The dews
 Of blessing from on high fall on you both,
 Sweet gentle maidens.

Anth. Sister of my thoughts,
 Look up, and comfort our poor Philocles.
 If I can construe looks, fatigue and care
 Weigh down the weary spirit, with the frame.
 Oh thou hast much endur'd ! thy graceful locks,
 That flow'd like unshorn Pæan's, squalid now,
 Matted with dust, and all neglected hang.
 The sun hath scorch'd thy cheeks ; the pond'rous casque
 Hath seam'd thy polish'd brow.

Phil. My kind Anthemoe,
 These marks of warlike labour best adorn
 The virtuous youth. A sweet and conscious pride
 The patriot toil endears.

Dio. Oh sacred Dian, [aside.]
 Can sanctimonious purity forbid
 To listen to that voice, which sweeter sounds
 Than birds, at close of day, or whisp'ring gales,
 That breathe, where fields of daffodils incline
 Their humid heads? Think not, to us, my brother,
 Less grateful thy return, tho' outward acts
 May fail to speak our joy, than when we led
 Ithome's virgins forth, with dance and song,
 To hail thee victor in the olympic course.

Phil. How my heart bounded with sweet ecstacy,
 When my lov'd sisters hail'd me, and my brows,
 With myrtle garlands wreath'd, and fragrant flow'rs,
 Lotus and hyacinth!—While life remains,
 The dear remembrance of that happy morn
 Be cherish'd in my soul. But we must part:—
 Again I seek the camp; so runs the mandate,
 To me unquestion'd, as the laws of Jove.

Anth. Must thou, so soon, depart?

Phil. This very hour.

Dio. Must thou depart, o Philocles?—When?—Where?—
 How near Messene's force encamp the Spartans?

Phil. So near, that oft, redoubling on the wind,
 We hear their shouts; and oft, within our camp,

From bands advanc'd, a fleet of arrowy show'r
Glooms on the day ; while our warm youth reproach
Their king's delay, and scarcely wait the signal
That, from the rampart's mound, like famish'd tigers,
Shall pour them on the foe.

Dis. Before thy breast,
May hands invisible extend a shield,
Impervious to the foe.—I am to blame,
Thus freely speaking, with unbashful brow ;
It ill befits my sex.

Phil. Oh happy days
Of childhood innocence, and liberty !
Sorrows and cares flew o'er our little heads,
And touch'd them not ; we pour'd th' expansive heart
Without restraint ; while, foster'd by the breath
Of hope and joy, spontaneous on our lips,
Rose the first blossoms of our infant thoughts.

S C E N E III.

Enter, to them, ARISTODEMUS.

Aris. Forbear my daughters.—I must chide you both.
Your softness is infectious. Ill the tear
Becomes that soldier's cheek ; for shame, for shame !

Phil. Parting from these dear maids,—perhaps, for ever,—
Some human drops would fall.

Arif. Lace on thy helm,
And hide these marks of weakness, poise thy spear,
And get thee to the camp.

Phil. Yet one short moment
Be to my sorrows giv'n ;—if e'er thy heart
With love or pity melted.

Arif. I'll not trust thee,
A moment longer, in the fatal confines,
Of soft infection. The contagious air
Would blast thy laurels.—Go, these foolish maids,
With puling accents, would unman thy heart
And steal thee from thyself. Once more, away!
And know, my daughters, 'tis not maidenly,
With harden'd brow, to meet the gaze of men ;
The silver queen of night and stronger orb
Of glorious day are each for th' other made ;
Yet seldom do they meet. Ev'n with a brother,
A due reserve must seal the maiden's lips ;
And brief must be their greetings.—Let the loom,
And converse sweet, in female privacy,
Deceive the lapse of time, the precious balm
Sequester'd springs, and doubly is desir'd.

Dione and Anthemoe retire.

S C E N E IV.

ARISTODEMUS and PHILOCLES.

Arif. Young man, to talk thy fortitude remains
 A noble sacrifice. Haste to the camp;
 But think not, there to find, sole enemies
 The spartan force oppos'd, more deadly foes
 Inhabit here, and a more cruel war [*laying his hand on his breast.*
 Must with thyself be wag'd.

Phil. Ne'er shall thy son
 Disgrace thy noble name.—Almighty love
 Shall actuate his soul.

Arif. No more of love;
 Ill omen'd sound to glory.—From thy soul
 Banish whate'er may webs of passion spread,
 To snare thy reason. Let exalted aims
 Give value to thy deeds; and quench the fires
 That blast the bud and promise of thy youth.—
 Reply not with thy voice, but thine obedience.
 What thou wouldst say, I will imagine said.

[*Exit Philocles.*

Seat of the gods, Ithome, crown'd with tow'rs,
 Shall blackning clouds of smoak involve thee round,
 With fiery sparks, long-streaming on the night?

Shall Sparta's sword devour thy valiant youth,
And lead thy virgins captive?—

SCENE V.

Enter, to him, EPHEBOLUS.

Epheb. Tis yet
Delays his wish'd return. Our people crowd
The gates, and line the ways ; not more desir'd
By swarthy throngs on Egypt's palmy plain,
Or anxious watch'd, the annual overflow
Of bounteous Nile, than, by our throbbing hearts
And eager eyes, his presence.

Arif. Holy man,
Perhaps, it is a crime to fear his coming ;
And wish delay'd, what promises salvation
To the gen'ral weal ; yet, sure, my spirit fails,
With some unwonted horror, when I think,
What revelation from th' offended gods
His tongue may utter, and around me calls
A thousand phantasms, and strange forms of ill
Attendant on his voice.

Epheb. Why shouldst thou fear ?—
I know he brings redemption for the land ;

Such tidings never, to the patriot breast,
Harsh or unwelcome found.

Arif. Rever'd and wife,

Thou chosen of the pow'r, whose piercing beams,
Thro' the deep veil of dark eternity,
Pervasive strike the future, doth thy god,
Compassionate of human blindness, send
The visions of the night?—To thee, I blush
To own a weakness, which would speak my mind
The prey of female terrors; a sad dream,
With direful presage of impending ills
On me and mine, redounding from the response
That Tifis brings, hath overwhelm'd my soul;
And much I fear his coming, as the pris'ner,
Trembling and panting thro' the shades of night,
The awful suffrage, from the hill of Mars,
Dispens'd to Cecrops' sons.

Ephes. By various means,

The gods, compassionate of erring man,
Unfold events to come. The flight of birds;—
The victim's entrails, panting yet with life;—
The path of lightning, volley'd thro' the air;—
Meteors and prodigies,—and dreams, the last;—
But these less certain;—for the mind of man,
From wrecks and remnants of the day forepast,
Action or thought, illusive vision forms,
And oft disease, with phantasms strange and wild,
Around each organ plays.

Arif. I am not apt

To yield my faith to dreams. Weak is the mind,—
That thinks the wild disjointed phantasms, form'd
From wrecks and remnants of our waking thoughts,
An effluence of the gods, a revelation,
To favour'd mortals, of their sacred will,
Which, surely, were most weak, and vainer still
Than that of mankind, were it like our dreams;
Yet still th' impression of my last night's vision,
Waking returns, with such strong influence,
That I, perforce, must yield to its suggestion.

Ephcb. You raise my wonder.—What portentous forms,
In vision seen, could shake your nature thus?

Arif. Methought, I heard the din of horns and hounds,
And huntress Dian soon appear'd in view.
A beauteous hind fled swift, before the dogs,
Of stern Laconia's breed, that eager urg'd
The chase; her flanks they seized, and Dian then
Let fly a feather'd shaft, and in her gore
The victim palpitated.—Pity-mov'd,
Awhile, I musing stood, but stood not long;
For soon, methought, my daughter's voice I heard,
Tender and lamentable, and on me
She call'd, for aid and pity: round I turn'd;
I saw her not; but, in procession long,
A train of priests a milk-white heifer led,
With fillets wreath'd, as for a sacrifice.

Epheb. As for a sacrifice!—What may this mean?

Arif. Awhile I gaz'd; but, quickly, from my view,
In clouds, the pageant vanish'd; and the spot,
Whereon I stood, with virgin flow'rets teem'd;
The lily chief, all pale and eminent,
Display'd her fragrant cups. I turn'd, intent
To form a wreath, and join the sacrifice,
And cropt the tender stalks; when, dire to view,
The wounded stems emitted streams of gore,
That stain'd my hands and garments; and again,
Tender and lamentable, as before,
My daughter's voice was heard.—Trembling I woke.

Epheb. 'Tis strange and awful. Heav'n avert the presage!—
Heard you that shout?—Sure, Tis is hath return'd.
And lo,—he comes encircled by the crowd,
That hang upon him, and, with eager haste,
Of questions multiplied, preclude the response,
They greedily demand.—Relenting gods,
Send us propitious tidings!—yet, my heart
Sinks at the heavy cheer and deep dejection
His visage wears.

Arif. Whate'er he brings, the gods
Will arm our hearts, with patient fortitude,
To bear the doom. Enough, for us, to know,
And that we know with certainty;—nor wrath
Of vengeful Jove, nor force of pow'rs malign,
Can rob the virtuous, of his self-applause;
The valiant, of an honourable death,

S C E N E VI.

*Enter, to them, EUPHAES and TISIS, with a crowd of
MESSENIANS.*

Euph. Tisis, declare what Phœbus, from his shrine,
Hath to thine ear unfolded.

Tis. Oh Ithome!

Reluctant, I approach thee, tho' I bear
Deliv'rance to the land! for, my soul sinks,
While fancy's pourtraiture the sorrow shows,
For some kind heart prepar'd. Stern deities,
Why on these lips impose the cruel task?

Euph. Oh spare our feelings, Tisis;—instant say,
Bringst thou or good or ill from Pæan's shrine?

Tis. For good the worst,—for ill, not without hope.—

Euph. Sure, thou hast learn'd, in sounds oracular,
To veil thy meaning. Tisis, by the gods
And all our hopes of safety, we adjure thee
With plainness speak, what we are doom'd to hear;—
Say, shall Ithome stand?

Tis. Her tow'rs may stand.

But, oh ye gods, at what a fatal price,
Their fall must be redeem'd!

Aris. It is enough.

O Pæan! Pæan! if Ithome's fall
May be redeem'd; we bless the bounteous gods,
Prepar'd, to learn the worst, and gladly pay
Th' appointed ransom.

Euph. Matrons, fires, and virgins,
That, in this hour of dire calamity,
Await th' eventful sounds from Delphi's shrine,
With meek submission, to the mandate bend.

Tis. For many days, the Pythoness delay'd
Her answer; but our pray'rs, at length, prevail'd;
Retir'd within a cavern, all her soul
Was with the godhead fill'd.—Then, forth she came.—
Parnassus trembled, the castalian spring
Ran backward to its source, the maid inspir'd
With sacred rage, enthusiastic swell'd,
Her hair erected stood; her alter'd form,
Dilating, seem'd to rise and grow before me,
To giant stature; and her voice was chang'd,
For tones not mortal; from her foaming lips,
These sounds tremendous issued;—while the laurels
And groves around me, lowly, bent their heads,
As in obedience to the deity.

THE ORACLE.

"MY SON, TO RESCUE THE MESSENIAN LAND,

"AN HUMAN SACRIFICE THE GODS DEMAND;

"OLD ÆPYTUS MUST FURNISH FROM HIS LINE,

"A SPOTLESS VIRGIN, FOR DIANA'S SHRINE."

Lys. Oh sounds of horror!—Said he not a virgin?— [*aside.*
A virgin, from the house of Ægyptus.

Arif. Here is the beauteous hind, the virgin flow'r.— [*aside.*
O Dian, cruel huntress! must my child
Before an altar bleed?—Yet grant me, gods,
A strong enduring heart; to form my deeds
Submissive to your will, which must prevail,
And still is best, whate'er, in mazes tost,
The blind and erring thoughts of man may deem.

Euph. I see the crowd recoil; and horror blank
Dwells on each brow.—Ye have the response heard.
However some may suffer, let the thought,
That with their pangs they buy their country's safety,
Console the suff'rers, dry the parent's tears,
And bid the lover, with proud triumph yield
The chosen of his heart.—Tell me, ye fathers,
And anxious mothers, tell me; were it best,
To see disease and famine chill consume
The bloom of beauty? Or, far worse, behold
The virgin, by the brutal ravisher,
Twisting his savage hand in her fair tresses,
Drag'd from her mother's arms, the prey of lust?—
No,—ye will give to virgin deity
A virgin sacrifice; and while that act,
From loathed violation, shall preserve
The virgin's lov'd companions, from the sword
Our brave Messenians; let the glorious thought

Endear the blow, which sends a gentle shade
To blissful seats of peace and innocence.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

The same place continues as in the last act.

Enter ARISTODEMUS and LYSISCUS.

LYSISCUS.

A SAD distinction 'tis, to be supreme
In misery!—What avails our noble blood,
From Æpytus deduc'd?—The wretched parents
Of our devoted house now crowd together,
And o'er each other mourn; with sighs and groans
The common doom bewailing; yet, in secret;
For the rude populace, with clamours loud,
Call for atoning blood, themselves exempt
From touch of danger, in the common peril;
And human feelings, and parental tears
Are sins, against the lordly majesty
Of their misrule.

Arif. I love my child, *Lyfiscus*,
 As much as father ever lov'd a daughter.
 Her gentle manners, her sweet blooming youth,
 Her filial duty, and the hopeful promise
 Of ev'ry virtue, cling around my soul,
 Ineffable endearment;—but, I know
 My country gave her, a most precious pledge,
 To bind my faith; and should that country claim her,
 Tho' more than life in yielding her I yield,
 She is no longer mine.

Lyf. Thy nature tow'rs,
 Above the weakness of mortality.
 Thou chief, as head of us who trace our birth
 From *Æpytus*, must feel this oracle
 War with thy dearest hopes; but may we not
 Withdraw our children?—Still, enough remain
 From *Æpytus* deriv'd.

Arif. Unworthy thought!—
 When all exertions of the citizen
 In field, in council, or, deficient there,
 In precept, or example, are requir'd;
 Our flight were treason.

Lyf. If the populace
 May judge for us, that, in distinguish'd rank,
 Expos'd to public gaze, and envy dwell;
 Whate'er opposes their o'erweening will
 Is treason.

Arif. 'Tis not for the populace
 And vain acclaims ; but for the majesty
 That dwells attendant on the sacred name
 Of parent country, whose high reverence
 Most home and inward to the bosom springs
 In virtuous men ; ev'n dearer than the love
 Of wife and children, and within itself
 Embraces all, that to the human mind
 Is most congenial.—I will to the fane,
 There wait my doom with trembling resignation.

[*Exit Aristodemus.*]

S C E N E II.

TECMESSA and LYSISCUS.

Lyf. My poor Anthemoe, have thy father's cares
 Nurtur'd thee for the altar ?—Oh Tecmessa,
 What perils wait our child !

Tecm. Around the fane,
 The crowd assembles, and the common sort,
 If any of the house of Æpytus
 Pass thro' the streets, with a malignant joy,
 Survey the wretches, whose predestin'd pangs
 Shall glad the meaner herd.—O say, Lysiscus,

What arts of prudence from our sweet Anthemoe,
Avert the fatal blow ?

Lyf. Alas, I know not.

Smote by the terrors of th' impending storm,
Prudence and foresight fail. At random borne,
By the resistless tide of adverse fate,
I float a passive wreck.

Tecm. Before the shrine
Of matron Juno, humbled in the dust,
From dawn of morning, to her guardian care,
With streaming tears and lowly oraisons,
I have my child commended. A sad train
Of wretched matrons, trembling, like myself,
For their dear progeny, with squalid looks
And hair dishevell'd, spread in prostrate ranks,
Choak up each avenue, and fill the steps ;
And, with low-murmur'd pray'rs and fainting hearts,
Weary the pow'r, they scarcely hope to move.

Lyf. Close to our camp, the spartan force advanc'd,
With hourly danger of a mortal field,
Harrows the breast paternal.

Tecm. Oh, my son,
In graceful promise of accomplish'd manhood,
To ripe perfection growing, o forgive me,
If all my bosom, with thy sister's danger
Possess'd and fill'd, awhile forgot my boy ;
Scarce in my pray'rs included.

Lyf. My Tecmeffa,

Tho' grievous to the parent breast it is
To lose a stripling in th' advent'rous fight;
The noble mem'ry of the slain survives,
Some consolation to his weeping friends.—
But, to surrender to the lifted knife,
Prepar'd for sacrifice, a spectacle
And public pageant, the soft bashful maid,
For mild retirement form'd, and works of peace!
O 'tis unnatural!

Tecm. Say then, my husband,

While yet the danger hangs with doubtful weight
On all the house of Æpytus, wer't not wise,
To save our child by flight? I now may call her
Our only hope.—My sinking heart forebodes
That Philocles shall bleed.—Our ruler's doom
Will soon appoint a victim,—Should th' award,—
Avert the dire event, propitious heav'n!—
But should our ruler's doom.—I cannot shape
My tongue, to speak the rest.—Nor art, nor force,
Could stem the people's rage, or save from death.—

Lyf. Awhile defer this theme;—for, with Dione,
Our sad Anthemoe comes.—Approach, my children.

S C E N E III.

Enter, to them, DIONE and ANTHEMOE.

While yet th' offended gods delay their vengeance,
Let us embraces join.—The tempest soon
Will rise, and howl, and blacken o'er the land,
And we must part for ever.

Tecm. Shall my throes
No children boast, to comfort the decline
Of weary age?—My son, th' untimely victim
Of war's wide havock, on th' ensanguin'd plain
Shall sink the prey of vultures; and my daughter,
Whom I have cherish'd with a mother's pride,
And fondly treasur'd, as a precious gem,
In secret shining, to make rich our house;
She too shall perish.

Anth. Dear the light of heav'n,
And sweet the pleasures, vernal time of youth
And ease and affluence bring; resigning these,
Tho' I must heave a sigh of fond remembrance
For the calm joys of childhood, yet, my heart
Clings not to these; my feeble soul recoils,
O'erwhelm'd at thoughts of parting from your arms,

My tender parents ; and from thee, Dione,
Soft sister of my soul.—Yet thou alas,—
Oh would to heav'n, we were not, in our fates,
Environ'd by the common lot of danger,
As in affection, sisters !

Dio. Yet 'tis happy ;
The perils from the pythian oracle
Threat not the manly progeny. 'Tis just,
Our weak and worthless kind should pay th' atonement,
And spare the vig'rous youth, with warlike arms,
To guard their parent soil. Thy gallant brother
For brave exertions shall reserve his blood,
While thou, or I, with holy fillets wreath'd,
A weak and timid, but a spotless victim,
May fall before the altar.

*Dione and Anthemoe, retiring to some distance from Lyfiscus and
Tecmessa, converse apart.*

Lyf. My Tecmessa,
The fond caresses of these tender children
Subdue my soul ;—intolerable pang,—
In vain, I struggle to repress the tears,
That scald my hoary cheek.

Tecm. Like sister graces,
Behold them hand in hand.—Are these meet subjects
Of bloody superstition ?—See their tresses,
That flow, like wreaths of sun-illumin'd clouds

On zephyr's wing light borne.—Shall these bright locks,
Clotted with gore, be trampled in the dust?

Lys. Spare me, Teumessa; do not rive my heart.

Teem. Canst thou forget the times of joy and peace,
When we have seen these children sport around us,
Whole summer days, like fawns, or playful kids;
And I have call'd them from their infant pastimes,
In wantonness, to wreath their little heads,
With rural diadems of sweetest flow'rs,
As queens of Flora's realm; and braid, with myrtle
And young and glossy tendrils of the vine,
Their locks, that vied in smoothness?—See their forms,
Deck'd by all bounteous nature, emulous
Of cyprian Venus, when consenting heav'n
Show'd roses on her birth, and where she trod
Exulting earth, in sign of gratulation,
Bade flow'rets spring, and fragrant scents abound.

[*Anthemoe and Dione come forward.*]

Anth. Oh talk not, my Dione, as our fates
Where sep'rate or distinct, and thou couldst perish,
And I survive.—Our thoughts, our hopes, our joys,
Have been united, with such faith entire,
That death shall not divide us.

Dio. Sure, Anthemoe,
Each is a portion of the other's being.
One mind, one spirit, actuates two frames;
And should the gods disjoin those equal parts,

Harmoniously adapted each to each,
 And to perdition doom a moiety,
 The residue would droop, and pine away,
 Of half its vital principle and essence
 Bereft.—From childhood have we grown together,
 Like tender plants, that neighbours first, then meet,
 Then join their pliant stems, 'till the same bark,
 Indissoluble union, closes round.

Anth. Yet hope for good.

Dio. Amidst our miseries,
 It cheers my soul, that Philocles is absent.
 'Twill spare some anguish to his gentle heart;
 Which, well I know, would bleed, for thee, and haply
 Feel ev'n for me, should the stern deities
 Demand our votive blood.—Thy parents hear
 And censure my free speech.—Let us retire,
 And mingle thoughts in secret.

Anth. Let us seek
 The winding paths along the river's side,
 With roses skirted and each flow'ring shrub.
 The sylvan deities with partial eye
 Regard the chosen spot.

[*Exeunt Dione and Anthemoe.*]

S C E N E IV.

LYSISCUS and TECMESSA.

Lyf. With what a grace

They parted, like two nymphs of Dian's train !

Tecm. Of Dian's train ! alas, ill-omen'd sound.*Lyf.* She must not die.—Say, should we think of flight,

Might we not, in the fane of matron Juno,

Conceal the maiden, by thy sister's aid,

'Till night with friendly mantle veil our steps ?

Tecm. In Juno's fane ! what hast thou said Lysiscus ?

In Juno's fane ! some god inspires the thought

Pregnant with safety for Anthemoe.

Lyf. With safety for Anthemoe ! whence, or how,
Save by our flight, and that a doubtful cast ?*Tecm.* My sister, kind Evadne, loves Anthemoe,
With fondness, greater far, than common parents
Bear their own offspring ; and this very morn,
By matron Juno swore, within whose fane
Her blameless days she spends, that, for my child,
Her life she would adventure. At the shrine,
We pray'd together ; and methought, from heav'n,
A lambent light fill'd all the sanctuary

Above, below, around :—'tis Juno sure.—

My spirits mount, with present deity.

My heart, dilating, whispers, that my child

May be preserv'd.—Farewell, I seek my sister.

Question me not ; but be thou confident,

Means may be offer'd by propitious heav'n.

[Exit Tecmessa.

Lysiscus remains musing and wrapt in thought ; enter to him, at first unobserved, Alcander, as from the camp, disguised like a Peasant.

S C E N E V.

LYSISCUS and ALCANDER

Alc. Thou little know'st, unhappy Philocles,
 What storms of adverse fate invade thine house,
 And a still dearer pledge. O how approach
 This wretched family ! there is a terror,
 An awful stern rebuking in misfortune,
 That more confounds the sympathetic mind,
 Than all the pageantry of frowning guards,
 Robes, and tiaras, which the slavish east
 Ordains for tyranny.

Lys. Approach, Alcander.

Why stand at distance ; as a messenger
 Fraught with unwelcome tidings ? Say, how fares
 My son ? What wond'rous chance, at eve of fight,
 Returns a fervid youth, to this poor space,
 By hostile bands beleaguer'd, where, alone
 Enfeebled age and helpless women range
 From fane to fane, and weary all the gods,
 With fruitless oraisons ?

Alc. His plighted oath,
 And awful fear of stern Aristodemus,
 Inviolable ties, confine thy son,
 Within the neighb'ring camp, the wretched victim
 Of agonizing fears, lest some sad doom
 Should wait his dear connections. He besought me,
 Thus shrouded in a peasant's humble weeds,
 To learn what Phœbus dooms ;—thus various calls
 Impelling variously,—the voice of fame,—
 And plighted friendship,—could I hesitate ?

Lys. Thou seest us, in the web of adverse fate
 Involv'd, beyond redemption. Thou hast heard
 What Phœbus hath enjoin'd, the thunder bolt
 Hangs threatening yet uncertain.—Could my son
 Behold his sister bleed ?—

Alc. No.—Had he learn'd
 The direful mandate, soon his eager steps,
 All other cares despising, in the danger

Of those he loves so dear, would seek Ithome,
To share their woful doom.

Lyf. Hear ye not founds
Of solemn minstrelsy ? They sink and swell,
Roll'd hither on the breezes.

Alc. 'Tis the pageant,
Led on by Euphaes, with solemn march
And sad religious pace ; to the deep touch
Of the grave lyre, and softly breathing flute ;
Not unaccompanied by warbled strain
Of choral hymn melodious.

Lyf. Sons of Æpytus,
How beat your bosoms now ? The doom is nigh.
The gods will have their victim. Cruel Dian
Shall bathe in blood.—I see the lifted knife ;
The consecrated vessels are prepar'd,
To catch the spouting gore?—How look'd the king,
Stern or compassionate ?

Alc. In his looks, the king
A stern composure wears, yet mixt with glances
Of pity that confess his melting-soul,
Recoils, in secret, from the task of duty,
The gods impose.

Lyf. Sawst thou Aristodemus ?

Alc. All pale and haggard, as from painful vigils,
Beside the king he moves ; yet, in his port,
A majesty elate, that seems to raise him
Above the crowd, upborne in paths of air,

Not treading the low earth, a piercing fire
 Fills his commanding eye. His awful brow
 Seems charg'd with cogitations vast and deep.—
 'The fate of kingdoms, and the means of good
 To myriads yet unborn. Ephebolus,
 In robes of snowy white array'd, and crown'd
 With wreaths of laurel, intermix'd with fillets
 Of purest wool, comes next, his heavy eyes
 Fast rivetted on earth; and seems to faint
 Beneath oppression of his dreadful function.

Lyf. At Dian's fane, contiguous, horrid thought!
 Ev'n now commence the rites of cruelty.

S C E N E VI.

Opens and discovers a large area, with a Temple, supposed to be that of Diana. A Proceſſion led by EUPHAES, ARISTODEMUS on his right hand, TISIS on his left. EPHEBOLUS, with the other prieſts of Apollo and the prieſts of Diana, robed in white.—
CHORISTERS and MUSICIANS.—Then the houſe of ÆPYTUS, and laſt, a numerous train of MESSENIANS.—They range themſelves around the Temple.—EUPHAES comes forward in the act of addreſſing the crowd; two prieſts of Apollo ſtand behind him, the one bears a white veil, and bands of white wool; the other an urn, wreathed with laurel, and fillets of white wool.—The urn in-

tended for the purpose of deciding, by lot, what virgin of the house of ÆPYTUS should be offered to Diana; the fillets to bind the veil to be thrown over the appointed victim.—Preparatory to the ceremony of the lot, a solemn hymn is performed by the band of CHORISTERS and MUSICIANS.

H Y M N.*

PRIME entity, eternal and unchang'd,
 Tho' wide in various forms thine attributes have rang'd;
 Whatever symbol, or whatever name,
 Describes thee, all-pervading flame,
 Thro' earth, and air, and sea,
 A vast expansive scene
 Of goodness, and of pow'r,
 An effluence bright from thee,
 Imparted essence pure of deity,
 Doth nourish all things; robe this orb in green,

* The use of human sacrifices has been very general, among all pagan nations, polished and barbarous, ancient and modern. We find them among the Greeks and Romans, even when they were considerably advanced in civilization. They were more generally practised, by the Scythians, Germans, Gauls, and Britons; and history informs us that they were not unknown to the people of Mexico. Under the terror of impending evils, human sacrifices were employed as expiatory rites, of sovereign efficacy to avert the wrath of offended deity. In the exultation of prosperity and success, they were considered as the most grateful oblation which could be paid to the gods in return for their bounties. Sometimes, the sacrifice was the act of the community, fe-

And feed whatever creatures live and move,
 Whether they swim, or creep, or walk, or fly
 The deeps, the rivers, earth and sky;
 Doth endless blessings show'r,
 And prove, in all, thy wonder-working love.
 Whate'er we have is thine;
 Whate'er is dear to thought, or sight,
 All is imparted by thy bounteous hand,
 A portion of ineffable delight,
 That in the sphered mansions bright,

lecting and immolating the victim, with all the pomp of religious solemnity; sometimes, of the individual, devoting himself, and averting the wrath of the gods by a voluntary death. The most memorable instances of the former kind were the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter, in Jewish story, of Iphigenia, and the subject of the present drama: instances of the latter kind are more numerous.—Menæceus the son of Creon, in the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides;—Macaria, in the *Heraclidæ* of the same poet;—Alcestis, who devoted herself to death, to prolong the existence of her husband;—Codrus, the last king of Athens;—Leonidas,—and the Roman Curtius, are among the names which present themselves immediately to my memory. The ceremony of self-devotion became a constant practice among the Romans, whenever their troops were hard pressed, and the event of a battle dubious, and it never failed of ensuring success to their arms.

Whence is it, that a practice so shocking and repugnant to the feelings of humanity, and to the first dictates of nature, has so generally prevailed?—From the cause which has led human creatures to torment themselves, by voluntary seclusions, pilgrimages, penances, and various forms of self-mortification; and to destroy their fellow-creatures by religious wars and persecutions,---FANATICISM.

The mind, astonished and overawed by extraordinary events, whether good or ill, is led to the contemplation of some superior beings, the disposers of human affairs, as the authors of them: if the incidents should be favourable, the person who experiences them, is led to consider himself as an object of the peculiar favour, and immediate interference, of

Unmix'd and perfect, dwells with thee alone.
 When, stooping from thine high translucent throne,
 Thou dost thine own demand,
 Shall man, ungrateful man, with rebel aim,
 Seek to detain the boon, or at thy will repine?

It is not that the gods, all-wise and good,
 Delight in human blood;
 But prompt obedience and submission due
 Are offer'd; to the pow'rs on high,

an over-ruling providence; if they are calamitous, overwhelmed with the horrors of his situation, he sinks in superstitious gloom, and supposes himself the peculiar mark of divine wrath; the victim of a cruel and vindictive deity, singling him out for visitation. In both cases, an overheated imagination begins to work, and fanatic gratitude supposes that this peculiar friendship and interference of the divinity, deserves the most precious offerings in return; on the other hand, the mind, sinking under the weight of sufferings, which it takes to be revelation of divine wrath, and filled with fears and prefaces of vengeance, sets itself at work to devise means of appeasing the deity; a gloomy spirit will picture to itself a gloomy godhead; self-devotion and human victims will then present themselves; as the consummation of value in the sacrifice, and of piety in the votary; and the more cruel the religious rite, the more painful the struggle, the greater the outrage on the feelings of humanity, the more meritorious is the sacrifice supposed to be, and the more acceptable to the divinity.

I thought it was not out of character, to make the priests, in a hymn, supposed to be chanted by them previous to the selection of a victim for an human sacrifice, assign the only plausible reason which could be assigned for an human sacrifice,—that the gods did not accept them favourably from any delight they took in human blood; but because they considered them as unequivocal tests and pledges of man's obedience to the divine will. And something like this we find in the scriptures.—“Because thou hast not withheld thine only son; in blessing I will “bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee.”

More grateful, than the flocks Nonacria * feeds,
 Or all the hecatombs that grassy Pthia† breeds,
 Or clouds of incense, wreathing to the sky.
 Whate'er is dear and inward to the mind,
 The precious pledge that bids us cling to life,
 The darling object of our care and strife
 With ready zeal resign'd;
 'These are the mighty tests, that prove religion true.
 See meek-eyed duty, with submission low,
 And pious awe,
 Bends in the dust; nor the bold eyeball rears,
 Nor vaunts her, with presumptuous ken, to read
 In the dread archives of the starry spheres,
 Th' eternal reasons of what Jove decreed.
 For vain and impious the design,
 To fathom with the line,
 Of weak and erring human sense,
 What the good gods dispense;
 Or sound the depths of that unerring law,
 Which smites their creature man, with some afflictive blow,

Euph. Ye valiant sons of Ægyptus, who shine,
 Mark'd out by virtue, from primeval time,
 First of Messenians; let your high descent

* Nonacria, a district of Arcadia, so called from the fountain Nonacris.

† Pthia, part of Thessaly.

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Speak in your actions, on this awful day.
 Think not the mandate, from Apollo sent,
 Sounds adverse to your house; 'tis giv'n in love.—
 Yes, ye are singled out, on mission high,
 A chosen race, to send, from your pure stem,
 Not a mere victim, but an hallow'd envoy,
 Call'd by the gods, before the throne of grace,
 To stand unwearied, and, with spotless lips,
 Make pious intercession. In your breasts
 If patriot virtue burns, ye will contend
 For this high honour;—but pre-eminence
 In honour,—if with pious hearts ye weigh
 This mortal state, in sorrows,—if ye view,
 With worldly mind and selfish, let the chance
 Of lots decide; that none may criminate
 The doom, that honour gives, or takes a child?

Lyf. What dost thou purpose? Wilt thou see thy child

[*aside to Aristodemus.*

Pierc'd by the cruel steel of sacrifice?

Arisf. At such a period, when th' ennobled mind,
 Possess'd by the occasion, should call forth
 Its utmost energies, and stand collected,
 For great exertions; these enfeebling thoughts,
 That tend to disobedience, 'gainst what heav'n
 Reveals, and, in pursuance of its will,
 The magistrate ordains, are bold rebellion
 Against th' immortal gods, and treason palpable,
 Against the parent country.—Should the lot

Demand my sweet Dione ; tho' the father
 May mourn in secret ; yet, the citizen
 Shall thank the gods, that, from his house, derive
 Salvation to the land.

Eph. Hear, good Messenians,
 And chief, ye fathers, that from Æpytus
 Deduce your noble blood.—To the great gods,
 That with just chastisement are pleas'd to smite
 This suffering country, raise your hearts and eyes,
 With pure religious zeal ; that, on this day,
 The rich oblation made by piety,
 May turn away their wrath.—Awe-struck attend.—
 That urn of silver, by Aristus borne,
 Contains, within its womb, thrice thirty tablets,
 Of purest virgin wax, on each inscrib'd
 A maiden's name and line, who draws from Æpytus
 Her noble origin, in number equal
 To the fair daughters of that sacred line.—
 Thou, sage Eumolpus, with a snowy veil
 O'ershade thine eyes ; and first, with solemn pray'r
 Invoke directing Jove, and ev'ry god
 That guides the path of man ; with rev'rent hand
 Explore the tablet then, whose import high
 To trembling expectation shall reveal
 The gods' mysterious will.

Lyf. My reason fails—
 A father's feelings so unman my soul,
 That I must fly ; lest my ill-omen'd grief

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Should interrupt this high religious act,
 With groans and cries.—I'll visit my sad home,
 Weep o'er my child, and strain her to my breast,
 Haply the last, last, time. [Exit Lyfiscus.]

Ephēb. Prepare, Eumolpus.

[The priest covers his eyes with a white veil; he seems to pray for some time in silence, then draws forth a tablet from the urn, Ephebolus takes it, and displays it to the crowd.]

Ephēb. 'Tis Anthemoe the tablet bears inscrib'd.

Diana claims the daughter of Lyfiscus.

Euph. Aristus and Eumolpus, to the house
 Of old Lyfiscus haste: console his grief,
 With pious accents; then, conduct the maid,
 With snowy veils surrounded, to the fane.—
 Meantime, let no intemp'rate sudden burst
 Of joy indecent from the crowd escape,
 To break the solemn silence, that becomes
 The dread occasion; or a father wound
 With triumph, at the stern decree of fate,
 That takes his child, a victim for the land.

[As Aristus and Eumolpus are going out, for the purpose of conducting Anthemoe, from her father's house, to the Temple, Tecmeffa and Evadne, who had been concealed and heard what pass, break through the crowd, and come forward to the front of the stage].

Tecm. Deluded people ! vainly would ye dip
Your hands, in virgin gore. Anthemoe's death
Nor expiates the land, nor gives to Dian
An acceptable victim.—Marvel not,
At these my words so bold. The Pythoness
Demands libation of atoning blood,
From Æpytus ; and poor Anthemoe
Is alien to that stem.

Euph. Thy frantic woe
Misleads thee, with a hope to save thy daughter.—
Else, why this wild suggestion ? Thro' her veins
Pure flows the blood of Æpytus.

Tecm. So deems
The crowd, but falsely ; for th' unhappy maid
Disclaims all portion, in the fame and sorrows
That wait his line.

Euph. And wouldst thou brand thyself
With stain indelible ? Is not Lyfiscus
The father of thy daughter ?

Tecm. Tho' the faith,
At Hymen's altar plighted to my husband,
Hath ever been unstain'd ; yet, not the more
Is good Lyfiscus father of Anthemoe.

Euph. Woman, forbear ; th' important moments press,
Big with Messene's doom ; and, ere the sun
Reposes in the west, a spotless victim
Shall Dian's wrath assuage.—Retire thou hence,

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Nor let thy tongue, with vain loquacious grief,
Disturb the solemn rites, that save thy country.

Evad. King of Ithome, and assembled crowds,
Hear me ; for now my silence were a crime,
When blood of innocence, prepar'd to flow
An useless spectacle of cruelty,
Unacceptable to the gods, and chief
Messene's safety in Anthemoe's death,
Frustrate, with hopes illusory, by rites
Which give a victim, yet withhold atonement,
Resistless urge to speak, what fear and shame,
For many a painful year of conscious grief,
Have buried in deep silence. Hear and wonder.—
Anthemoe, whom ye seek to sacrifice,
As daughter of Lysiscus, owes to me
Her wretched being.

Euph. Miserable woman,
Where are the sanctimonious purity,
And sage decorum, that have mark'd thy life,
A model, for the matrons of Ithome ?
Dost thou come forward, in this great assembly,
To wound our ears with tales of wantonness,
And bold profession of a sin, whose taint
Scandals the holy function ?

Evad. Tho' my death,
Or worse than death, eternal infamy,
Hang on the words I utter ; yet, my tongue

Shall not recant.—Anthemoe is the fruit
From stealth of loves illicit. Young Lycanor,
The son of Dryops, was the virgin's fire.

Euph. It is incredible—a story forg'd—

Evad. Thou spirit of the dead, that from the tomb
Dost hover round unseen; oh thou, that hearst
My words, and knowst their truth, to fight reveal'd,
Endued with human organs, couldst thou stand,
Thy tongue would claim thy child. By that dear shade,
I swear; and call on ev'ry stygian pow'r,
In witness of my oath; each circumstance,
I now reveal, most shameful to myself,
Is yet most true.—The voice of love was urg'd
With such resistless ardour, it possest
Mine easy soul; and all a virgin could,
I yielded to Lycanor.

Euph. Wherefore then,
If from such intercourse the maiden sprang,
So rife and prevalent did common fame
Ascribe her birth to other parentage?

Evad. The lapse of time now threaten'd to disclose
The tender stealths, that friendly night conceal'd.—
I fought my sister, and with greater pangs
Than those of child-birth, which I after felt,
Urg'd her, with agonizing tears, from shame
To save her only sister; she, at first,
Struck with abhorrence, burst from my embrace,

And left me prostrate on the floor; but soon
 A sister's love return'd; and, by her aid,
 I bore Anthemoe; and the babe was nurs'd,
 As daughter of Lyfiscus and Tecmessä.

Euph. Thy story, urg'd with circumstance so strong,
 As falsehood scarce could forge, at least demands
 Delay and caution.—Let the crowd retire.—
 Postpone the sacrifice, left with a victim
 Unsought, unwelcome, we should mock the gods.

*[All retire, except Alcander, who comes forward to the front
 of the stage.]*

Alcan. Eventful hour, what prodigies of woe
 Crowd in thy narrow circle!—Oh my friend,
 How will these tidings harrow up thy soul
 With anguish multiplied! yet it is meet,
 That thou shouldst learn them.—I will to the camp,
 The perils that surround his father's house
 Demand the presence of my Philocles.

[Exit.]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

*The Temple of Apollo, EUPHAES, EPHEBOLUS, ARISTODEMUS,
and other MESSENIANS, as in Council.*

EUPHAES.

WHAT healing counsels, to the public ills,
Afford relief?—Lo, on the perilous eve
We stand of battle, whose event decides
Our safety or perdition; and th' atonement
Of virgin blood, sole hope of our redemption,
By Phœbus' voice enjoin'd, to Artemis
Remains unpaid.

Arif. The furious rabble now
Present a scene of anarchy and outrage.—
Impatient from their suff'rings past, and hope
Of near redress, they crowd around the fanes,
And throng the streets, with loud and fearful cries,
Calling for Dian's victim. Rev'rend order
And governance are silent, in the din;
The magistrates retire, before the torrent
Of popular rage, that rolls devouring on;

Hardly, as yet, their feeble efforts save,
From gen'ral massacre, the house of Ægyptus.

Euph. Vainly we thought our ills, devouring war,
Famine and pestilence were at their height.—
The strange distractions, that the city fill,
Double these horrors; and the state is sick
To dissolution; while, with fruitless care,
We, whom the will of heav'n hath call'd to guard
The public weal, apply the remedies
Of wholesome counsel and authority.

Epheb. The nobles stand aghast, before the populace,
Whom scarcely yet some weak remaining ties
Restrain from violence. Not more dismay'd
The timid shepherds view the hungry lion,
Ta'en in the toils, and struggling to break forth.

Tif. Some baleful demon o'er Ithome's tow'rs
Sails, wrapt in gloomy clouds; and sends abroad
A fell destroying spirit. The softer sex,
Possess'd with rage enthusiastic, range
Wild thro' the streets, like frantic Menades,—
With locks dishevell'd, and with haggard eyes.
They call aloud for blood; and shriek destruction
To all the house of Ægyptus.

Euph. Lyfiscus
Hath from Ithome, with his wife and daughter,
In secret stoln.—Say, shall a second lot
Decide whom we to Dian give? Or force

Pursue, and seize the votive maid, whom fate
 Ordains the sacrifice?—For sure, the tale
 Or love illicit and of spurious birth
 Is false and groundless by the sequel prov'd.

Arif. Messenian sages, hear what I propound.—
 I feel, methinks, my rising soul dilate,
 With active deity—I have a daughter,
 A virgin pure; the blood of Æpytus,
 From sire to son transmitted, thro' her veins,
 Courses unmix'd; to give her to the gods
 My soul is bent;—for what may satisfy
 Th' ambitious parent's pride, like such an union,—
 His daughter wedded to the deity.

Euph. Noblest of men, the gods sure speak in thee;
 'Twere impious to reject the voice divine.—
 Be it, as thou hast said.—What thanks and praise
 Shall grateful myriads pay?

Ephob. The sculptor's art,
 The painter's faithful hand, and holy bards
 Shall eternize thy name.

Arif. I seek no praise —
 Slow and reluctant I shrunk back, enslav'd
 By fond parental weakness. Deity,
 With stern commandment, and o'er-ruling voice,
 Wrought in my soul resistless,—Thus impell'd,
 Spite of myself, I offer up my child.
 A deed, which late posterity will hear,
 With doubtful thoughts; to censure, or applaud,

As times and manners vary.—Satisfied
 With dear remembrance of Ithome's safety,
 I wish, to sink in silence to the tomb,
 And rest beside my child. The only boon
 I claim, is some small pause, some resting space,
 To summon up the man within my soul;
 And discipline my thoughts, to meet the conflict
 Of warring passions: for of this be sure,
 That yielding up to death a darling child,
 Much more than life I yield.

Euph. We will not break
 The sacred silence, that thy griefs demand;
 But to the gods commend thee; and while love
 Of parent country fills the gen'rous breast,
 Thy name shall live most dear and venerable.

[*Exeunt all but Aristodemus.*]

S C E N E II.

ARISTODEMUS *alone.*

Arist. Ye gods, from seats of permanent delight,
 That look on wretched man, behold the conflicts
 That tear my bosom; with your influence,
 Raise me above myself, with strength endu'd,
 To meet th' impending trial, as I ought;—
 Dispel the low-born thought, the selfish aim,
 The fond relenting, and so nerve my heart,

That no compunctious visitings of nature
May steal me from my great and virtuous purpose.

[He covers his face, and kneels in the back part of the stage.]

Enter DIONE, who at first does not perceive her Father,

Dio. Thro' all the city piercing cries resound,
Of horror, mix'd with din of stormy rage,
And threats of violence.—My father absent,
Infuriate multitudes surround our house,
With stern and cruel eyes, and famish'd faces.—
Something they seem to ask, importunate,
With menace join'd ;—perhaps, Diana's victim.—
I tremble for my friend.—Her parents tore her,
By force, from my embraces.—When she parted
Methought, th' informing spirit left this frame.—
Unsafe at home, I range to seek my sire,
With trembling footsteps ; safest is the child
Near a lov'd parent ; he, with valiant arm
Will guard my weakness, for his health I fear.—
His cheer is alter'd ; he is deadly pale.—
Last night he spent, in deep and anxious musing,
Lonely and watchful ; and, at dawn of day,
Our slaves inform me, he went forth in silence.—

Our old and faithful Donax*, at a distance
 His steps pursued, and found, he sought a grove
 To Dian consecrated; prostrate there,
 Long time in pray'r he past.—Nor food, nor wine,
 Nor aught, that may repair the waste of nature,
 Since yester morn hath visited his lip.—
 Lo, there he kneels, in pray'r immoveable
 Absorpt, he sees not, hears not.—Sure, a weight
 Of lab'ring care and sorrow presses down
 His mighty mind.—Propitious be the gods,
 My father, to thine oraisons.—In silence,
 At rev'rent awful distance, will I stand.

[Aristodemus rises and turns round.]

Arif. Approach my child, Dione.

Dio. O my father.

Arif. What would my daughter?

Dio. To the mighty gods,

Commend me, in thine oraisons, my soul
 Shrinks at the sense of danger; and to thee,
 To thee, my father, clings for hope of safety;
 As the poor ship-wreck'd sailor to the rock,
 That rises firm amidst the toiling deep.

Arif. To me for hope of safety!—Danger whence?
 What means my daughter? Wherefore dost thou fear?
 Why hast thou ventur'd to commit thyself,

* Supposed to be one of the slaves of Aristodemus.

Single and unprotected, to the gaze
Of the presumptuous rabble, apt for deeds
Of violence?—Why range the public haunts,
That teem with licence?

Dio. Pardon me, my father;
I could not bear the terrors of thine absence.
A desp'rate multitude surround our house;
With menaces confus'd and indistinct,
The furious populace for Dian's fane
Demand a victim.

Arif. Hold my bleeding heart.—
In fullness of allotted time, the gods
Will find a victim.—Fair and graceful tresses!
Oh beauteous form! most sure, a soul divine
Dwells in that frame,—and shalt thou then be led
With fillet's wreath'd, to fall before the altar,
Like beasts that crop the herb?—Shall that pure blood
That courses thro' the veins, to minister
To perfect beauty, and to blameless life,
Smoak on the bloody steel?

[*aside.*]

Dio. Alas my father,
I fear for my Anthemoe; lest the crowd
Fanatic seize, and drag her to the altar,
A trembling victim.

Arif. Dost thou fear for her?—
Thou little know'st the danger.

Dio. I could die,
To save, from death, the sister of my heart.

[*aside.*]

Arif. 'Tis ev'n unto thy wish,—poor innocent. [aside.]

Dio. Where she to perish ; did not love for thee,
My dearest parent, chain me to this earth,
Our fates should be the same. Oft have I pray'd
The gracious gods, that we might die together.

Arif. What hast thou said of dying?—O, my child,
How shall I speak?—My soul, confounded, falls
Before her innocence ; it sinks awe-struck,
As at the thoughts of guilt. O virgin softness,
How dreadful art thou to my thought!—My limbs,
Trembling, refuse to bear me. A cold damp
Bedews my frame,—A deadly leaden weight
Presses my bosom, stops my lab'ring breath.—
Dione—daughter,—no,—it must not be.— [aside.]
Art thou, indeed, my daughter?

Dio. O my father,
Sure thou art sick to death. Some dreadful meaning
Lurks in thine hollow eye.—O, would to heav'n,
That I could rise above the worthless state
Of female weakness and simplicity,
To manly sense and courage, and deserve
To share my father's grief!

Arif. Call me not father.—
I startle at the name. There's in the sound
Something, I know not what, of horrible,
That makes my hair involuntary rise,
And damps the vital currents, like the juice
Of cold solanum.

Dio. Wouldst thou cast me off?—

Am I not then thy child?

Aris. Know this, Dione;

If thou, indeed, art mine; thou wilt resemble

Thy fire, not so much in the lineaments,

Uncertain oft, by outward causes chang'd,

As in the thoughts and aims.—'Tis thus, a fire

Lives in the virtuous child.—If thou, indeed,

Art mine; a spark of patriot worth should beam,

And kindle in thy breast; with thoughts elate,

To soar a pitch beyond the common herd,

That spring and wither, in the paths obscure

Of fordid privacy.—My child, Dione,

Should be illustrious.—Dost thou love thy country?—

I mean not, with such feeling as thy sex

Gives to the sound seducing. Dost thou glow,

With active zeal, to save thy native land?

Dio. My fervent pray'rs are breath'd, both morn and eve,

For peace and safety to my native land,

Dear in itself, still dearer for my father —

What can the feeble and unpractis'd hand,

And feebler mind, of a poor foolish maid

Contribute to the great and awful work

Of public welfare?

Aris. Much, too much, thou canst,—

Oh my sworn bosom!—to redeem thy country,—

Than sagest counsels more, and puissant arm.—

Thou bear'st within thyself the pledge, and means.

Dio. Have I the mighty pow'r to save my country,
A simple maid?—Instruct me how, my father.—
My prompt obedience, in the glorious task,
Shall prove that I inherit from my fire,
His virtues, with his blood.

Aris. Sad heritage!

Oh couldst thou read my thoughts, and spare my tongue
The dreadful lesson, which I have to teach,
And thou to learn! Instruct thee, o Dione!
Canst thou exalt thy woman's mind, to feel
Th' expansive kindness and exalted love,
Which thousands can include; and to the welfare
Of those we know not, those we ne'er have seen,
Of unborn myriads, that to being crowd,
Can sacrifice the present hopes, and aims,
Earth's bounded visions, narrow schemes of life;
And upward look, for guerdon and fruition,
In deathless honour, and the blest society
Of gods above; delight, without alloy,
Or bound, or period?—Couldst thou think, and act,
Thus, thus, Dione;—then wert thou, indeed,
Aristodemus' child.

Dio. Indeed, I feel

I am thy child, and never shall my life
Degen'rate, from the worth, that bids thy name
Resound illustrious, thro' the grecian states.—
Alas, my fire, Dione's simple mind
Ne'er ventur'd on the thoughts sublime, which lift

The mortal from this earth, in ecstacy,
 And mix him with the gods. The loom and distaff,
 And harmless sports, with virgins, my compeers,
 Or grateful oraisons, to the good pow'rs,
 That crown'd my youth with blessings, first and chief
 Of envy'd blessings, gave me such a fire ;
 These have fill'd up my time ; nor left a thought
 For other speculations. Yet I trust,
 Should great occasion call me, to exertions
 Of import to my country, I could rise,
 With soul elate, to meet the solemn act ;
 And prove myself thy daughter.

Arif. Yes Dione,

Thou art, indeed, my child, embrace thy father.—
 Oh that embrace destroys me !—My resolves,
 My steely fortitude are melted all,
 In that soft kiss.

Dio. Why dost thou weep, my father ?

Arif. Say, my beloved, should thy country's weal
 Demand a sacrifice ; couldst thou resign
 Thy youthful hopes and pleasures ?

Dio. Oh most freely.—

To save my country, I would live sequester'd,
 A willing victim, and consume my days,
 In pious rites and humble ceremonies
 Of duty to the gods.

Arif. Offended Dian

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Requires a virgin. Couldst thou then devote
Thy blooming youth to her?—

Dio. 'Tis what I've fought.—

Each morn, amidst my oraisons, I pray
A spotless vot'ry, in her fane to live
From worldly cares recluse.—Why dost thou weep?
Ne'er till this day did I behold thy cheeks
Stain'd with that woman's weakness.

Arif. O my country,

[*aside.*

This is the dreadful moment; let thy voice,
Silent and strong, re-animate my soul,
To pay the dreadful precious sacrifice.—
Sustain me, heav'n! One struggle, and 'tis past.—
To live Dione!—Art thou fond of life?
Still dost thou talk of living.—Couldst thou dare,
My child, Dione, couldst thou dare to die?

Dio. My days were so fill'd up with tranquil joys;
Such happy thoughts possess'd my youthful mind,
Paternal love preventing ev'ry wish,
And chasing from our peaceful home the steps
Of anxious sorrow and intrusive care,
That, ere the waste of all-devouring war
O'erspread our cultur'd plains, the thoughts of death
Ne'er visited my soul. Now, various forms
Of death, by famine, sword and pestilence,
Hourly presented to my tortur'd sight,
So wound my bosom, that, full oft, I think
Death were a refuge to the sad spectator

Of such calamities, and happier far
 The dead, who sleep in peace, than the survivors,
 Condemn'd to die in others, and at last
 To fall themselves. And often have I wish'd,
 When I have seen some pale expiring wretch
 Before me sink, that I could yield my breath,
 To save the hapless victims, that around me
 Have perish'd guiltless.

Arif. Oh my noble child,
 What hast thou said, with voice oracular?
 Thou little knewst;—and yet thou dost not know.—
 But be it to thy wish.—I find thee apt.—
 Hear then a dreadful truth:—no more my tongue
 Shall wrong thee, and in tedious circumstance
 Falt'ring involve it, as thy firmness doubting.—
 The gods require, that thou shouldst pour thy blood,
 A pure libation, to the offended pow'rs,
 Whose wrath afflicts thy country:—more my tongue
 Denies;—but, if thou art my child, Dione,
 Again embrace me; o, my beauteous daughter,
 The gods, the gods, demand thee!—I must fly,
 Lest I break forth in loud and fruitless yells
 Of womanish despair. Prepare thyself,
 To give a pattern of heroic worth,
 Which may thy sex ennoble:—call the gods,—
 And they will hear thee, and sustain thy soul,
 With graceful firmness to receive thy doom.—

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'Tis past—'tis done.—My child, my child, o heav'ns!—
 Here rest; secure beneath this sacred roof,
 From fear of outrage. When I can recall
 My scatter'd thoughts, I'll seek thee, and pursue
 The sad detail of thy mysterious fate.

[*Exit.*

S C E N E III.

DIONE *alone.*

She goes to the altar and kneels before it, some time, in silence.

How grateful are thy beams, thou glorious orb,
 Whose blessed ray invigorates the earth!
 Soon shall thy radiance strike my new-made tomb,
 And warm my senseless dust.—O Philocles,
 Wilt thou not weep?—I know that thou wilt weep,
 These eyes no more shall view thy graceful form.
 Yet, and the thought untimely fate endears,
 I perish, to preserve the honour'd names
 Of sire, and native land.—Th' etesian gales
 Winnow the buxom air, with gladsome wings
 Disporting round the earth, and call the buds
 And leaves, and flow'rs, to clothe the smiling plain.

How diff'rent far my op'ning spring of life !
 A deadly blight.—I must forbear this strain,
 Unworthy of my father.—To the gods,
 In silent awe, my oraisons shall rise.

[*She remains kneeling.*]

S C E N E IV.

PHILOCLEES and ALCANDER, *having returned secretly from the camp, enter disguised as peasants.*

Alc. Thus far, o Philocles, the gods have prov'd
 Propitious to our flight, and shrouded us,
 From eyes and tongues inquisitive. Yet, still,
 I tremble for our safety.—This return
 From camp, at eve of an eventful combat,
 To death, or penalty far worse than death,
 Subjects us both ; thee chief ;—the populace
 Will visit on thine head their frustrate hopes
 Of public expiation.

Phil. In this fane,
 We may conceal ourselves, 'till shades of night
 Give licence, thro' the streets to roam, at large.

Alc. Back to the camp;—for, now, each tender pledge
 Whose danger by the heart-strings pull'd thee home,

Hath gain'd a sure asylum; and relieves
Thy soul from anxious care.

Phil. Not so, my friend.

'Tis true my fire is fled: the rest remains
In doubt; save this, that, partners of his flight,
My mother, with my sister, and the priestess
Of Juno, left our house. One ancient slave,
Rear'd at my grandfire's board, and lov'd attendant,
From childhood, of my father, join'd their steps.—
May Jove direct their course, to shun the rage
Of the wild multitude.—But soft, my friend,
For lo, some pious maiden, with pure lips,
Breathes her petitions, to the guardian pow'r,
Whose presence fills this temple.

Dio. Sure, I hear

[*rising.*

The voice and steps of men.—Preserve me, heav'n!—
'Tis Philocles:—his heavy brow is charg'd
With gusts of stormy sorrow, and the tear
Suffuses his red eye.—Son of Lyfiscus,
Why art thou here? We learn, the spartan host
Camps near our army; and th' eventful hours
Teem with heroic actions.

[*aside.*

Phil. Wonder not;

Nor let me suffer, in thy gentle mind,
As heedless of my country's weal, or deaf
To honour's glorious call.—But the sad tidings!—
Think, what the breast fraternal must endure,—
A sister's fate so nigh!

Dio. Resign thy cares,
For our Anthemoe's fate.—The gods have found
Another victim.

Phil. Oh propitious pow'rs,
Grateful, to you I bend, whose influence
Protects my sisters; for, by the soft name
Of sister, I have ever lov'd to call,
Who holds within this heart a place so dear,
That language wants a term of fond and kind,
To give it name.

Dio. Alas, o Philocles,
In this day's strange event, thou wilt not find
Subject for gladness.

Phil. True, my heart will bleed,
For the devoted maid, gentle, and fair,
Like thee, if any lives, or ever liv'd,
That might with thee compare.—What pangs shall rend
The parent's breast! how agonize the soul
Of the fond youth, who doats, if ever youth
Doated like—wherefore does my falt'ring tongue
Desert th' unfinish'd period!

Dio. Philocles,
Feed not thy soul with images of joy,
And lov'd society, such as endear'd
The season of our youth.—There was a time—
But of such hopes, as of a parting cloud,
Irradiate for a moment with the sun,
Then melted into rain, think we no more.—

Learn resignation.—Thou beholdest the victim,
Selected by the gods, to bleed this day.

Phil. Thou—thou a victim? Can the gracious gods,
Good in themselves, that love and cherish goodness,
Can they look on, and mar their chosen work,
Their archetype and pattern of perfection?
Will not indignant Jove, whose partial hand
In loveliness array'd thee, dart his light'ning,
And blast the guilty rites?

Dio. Weak youth, forbear,
Whatever hopes or wishes may have dawn'd
Within the close recesses of the mind,
Unborn must perish, ere they reach thy lips.—
Th' eternal doom is past.

Phil. Thou shalt not bleed—
Oh fly th' abodes of anarchy and death,
Where cruel wrong, for virgin innocence,
Beneath religion's stole and snowy fillets,
Lurks in disguise.—With distant humble awe,
My care shall tend thy steps.

Dio. Son of Lyfiscus,
Repress th' unworthy thought, which derogates
From female dignity, and virgin honour.
Is this thy counsel to a grecian maid,
Call'd forth to virtue by her father's fame,
And chosen by the gods, to pay th' atonement
That gives Messene safety?—From this hour,
I hold myself a consecrated thing,

Strang'd from earth, pertaining to the gods.—

Soon will my fire return ; it is not meet

He find us here in parley.—Answer not ;—

Farewell, a long farewell, o Philocles !

[*Exeunt at different sides of the stage.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Continues in the Temple as before.

PHILOCLEES and ALCANDER.

PHILOCLEES.

WHY do I linger round these fatal walls ?

What dawn of hope remains ?

Alc. Retire, my friend ; -

The gods are adverse. To the camp return ;

For death, with infamy, awaits us here.

If we must perish, let some noble act

Of manly daring, to our fatal doom

Give worth and energy.—Better, in fight,

Illustrious fall ; than, like the felon wretch,

By sentence of the judge, and ruffian hand

Of common justice.

Phil. No, if death must come,

What matters for the form? I will not hence.

I am at war with prudence and myself.—

My madd'ning spirit with wild outrage labours,

What, yet I know not.—Strange and black chimeras

Inflame my boiling blood—I must preserve,

And will possess Dione.

Alc. Vain that hope;—

Her fire's decree, her own determin'd will,

The danger of the state, the people's rage

Loud calling for a victim; last, and chief,

The awful mandate of th' immortal gods,

All adverse to thy wishes.

Phil. Tho' th' abyfs

Of quick destruction gap'd before my steps,

The bound and punishment of my wild passion,

Yet would I strain her, in my trembling arms,

Press her into myself, on the wild verge,

Plunge madly down, embracing and embrac'd,

And dare the future worst.

Alc. I have adventur'd

My votive life with thine, a sacrifice

To that commanding love I ever bare thee;

But think not, I will listen to the sounds

Of bold impiety.—Almighty Jove

Will bid his thunders roll, and darted lightnings

Prostrate thy guilty head.

Phil. I am reprov'd
Not by thy words alone, that heav'nly vision
Represses each bold thought.

S C E N E II.

Enter DIONE.

Dio. Oh huntress Dian, soon my steps shall join
Thy virgin choir. The shaggy spoils of chase,
The rural armoury, the bow, the quiver,
The boar-spear, the light javelin, and the toils,
That woods and lawns, and sloping hills, surround,
Shall henceforth be my care.—Unhappy youth,

[*seeing Philocles.*

Why dost thou haunt my steps? Why trouble thus,
With sighs importunate, my few last hours
Of earthly sojourn? Know, estrang'd from earth,
The mate of virgin Dian, with the gods
My spirit dwells; and, when my blood shall flow,
For my lov'd fire, for thee, and all Messene,
A free libation, think not, that my shade
Will then depart;—it is already fled.—

Phil. Still art thou cold, as Peneus; still severe.—
Yet, once more, to thy pity I appeal,
And to thy love.—Tho' careless of thyself,

Feel for my suff'rings ; o relent, Dione,
And timely think, it is not one existence
Depends on thy resolve.

Dio. Th' immortal gods
Have seal'd my doom.—I know, not one existence
Depends on my resolve ; but that of myriads.—
I owe salvation to my native land,
And glorious victory o'er tyrant Sparta,
Matrons and virgins, aged fires and youths,
And lisping babes, all cry to me for safety.
My spirit must, for them, in wreaths of incense,
Ascend, and dissipate the leaden cloud
That overhangs Ithome.

Phil. Oh reflect,
Timely, reflect.—Canst thou, with eyes unmov'd,
Behold the sad preparative of death ?
The cruel rites, with fell solemnity,
Detail'd before thee ?—See the bloody priest,——
Oh sight of horror !——At thy gentle breast,
He aims the lifted knife.

Dio. I am prepar'd.—
Believe me, nature fondly clings to life.
I have array'd these images of death,
In dreadful pomp before me, and recoil'd
From the grim phalanx ; o'er my spirit pass'd
A momentary weakness ; on the ground
I sunk, dissolv'd in tears ;—but now 'tis o'er.
I stand, prepar'd, to sound the vast abyfs

Of dread eternity.—The morning dawns,
The smiling morn of a new entity,
In blest elysium, happy without bound,
Without alloy.

Phil. Oh by the sacred names, [kneeling.]
Of love and Venus, and each blessed pow'r,
That fills with good, and guards the life of man,
Yield, I conjure thee,—by the parted shade
Of thy fond mother, which now hovers round,
And chides thy rashness.—Wilt thou fall the victim
Of a vain father's pride?—Enough remain
To make the dire atonement,—Here I grow,
And clasp thy knees, and weep, and kiss the dust;
Here bide, a living monument, to shame
Thy frantic superstition.—Groveling thus,
Thus abject, will I lay me, in thy path.—
Trample this body,—spurn this groaning breast,—
Pass o'er these prostrate limbs, to meet thy doom.

Dio. O Philocles, a tear alone is mine;
And that perforce I give thee. We must part.
Yet, haply, by permission of the gods,
My shade may visit thee; and thou shalt hear
My warning voice, thro' the cool silent air
Of conscious midnight, calling thee from earth,
To join my steps, with amaranthus crown'd,
In bow'rs of endless joy.—Meantime, my soul
Hath summon'd all its strength; and call'd in aid
The father, in my nature, to sustain

My fainting virtue ; and I feel it beat,
 Within my heart, a pulse of manly daring.
 And shall a weak and unexperienc'd maid,
 Unmov'd, behold what daunts a gallant youth ?

Phil. Were I alone to perish, I could meet
 The direct forms of agonizing death
 By cruelty devis'd, nor shrink appall'd.—
 Thy danger, from her hold of constancy,
 My spirit shakes.

Dio. Attend, and learn, from me,
 The noble lore of patient fortitude.—
 In this day's awful work, I hope to show
 A soldier's firmness.

Alc. Wretched youth, thy shame
 Is now consummate.—Lo, with eye severe,
 Where no relenting, for a lover's weakness,
 Or youthful folly, bides,—Aristodemus.

Phil. No matter ; let him come, my soul is wound
 To that high pitch of wild extravagance,
 By love and anguish, I have lost the sense
 Of fear and reverence. Life is now, to me,
 A strange distemper'd dream ; where all things mix
 In rude and stormy chaos.

S C E N E III.

Enter, to them, ARISTODEMUS.

Aris. Is it well?

Say, is it well, young man, that here I see thee,
At eve of fight? Unworthy as thou art
Hast thou forgot thine oath? The sloping sun
Hath yet some space to travel, ere he quench
His fiery wheels in ocean, and this morn
Didst thou, with solemn adjurations, call
The ruler of the day, to mark thy vows,
That never wouldst thou seek Ithome's tow'rs
Unless in triumph, and with spartan blood
Painted illustrious.

Phil. Now, all care of fame
Be vanish'd.—This devoted virgin fills
My soul and senses; ev'ry other object
Seems like th' unheeded gawds of witless childhood,
There was a time, with more than filial awe,
I bow'd to thee, and fear'd thy frown, as death;
But 'tis no more. I feel my heated brain,
To frantic words, and still more frantic deeds,
Hurry me.—Oh, thou sure unnatural,

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What dost thou purpose? Wilt thou stain thy hands
With guileless blood?

Aris. Were not my lab'ring mind
Possess'd and fix'd, with all its faculties,
On the great work the mighty gods propound,
I would pursue thee, 'till thy country's justice
Had mark'd thee out, a warning spectacle,
To all, who, in the needful hour of trial,
Desert the common cause.—Of this no more.—
Retire with me, my child; we must prepare—
Diana calls thee; and, in bridal robes,
We must adorn thee, for this glorious union
Of mortal with immortal.

Dio. O my father,
Now is my time, to rise in patriot worth,
And vindicate my claim and part in thee.—
Now am I firm, as the self-centred stars,
Fix'd in their orbits. Farewell, Philocles;
I look towards the day, when we shall meet
In perfect innocence.

[*Exeunt Dione and Aristodemus.*]

Phil. And art thou gone?
Wilt thou not stay and bless me? What adornings?—
What bridal robes? O deed of tenfold horror!—
To part for ever, like the falling star,
Which shoots athwart the hemisphere of night,
And then is seen no more!—By force to rush
Keen on the cruel priests, and with the sword

Rescue the victim!—Yes, ye men of blood,
 Ye shall be satisfied; and on your heads,
 Will I retort your purpose.—Human victims
 Must surely fall;—but not an helpless maid—
 Nor ye the sacrificers; this hand shall learn
 New functions; a new priest shall offer up
 Blood-thirsty men, to gods athirst for blood.

Alc. Impious alike, and vain were such attempt.
 Danger to thee, not safety to Dione,
 Waits the rash act; th' impatient multitude
 Would tear thee piecemeal.

Phil. Pardon me, Dione, *[after a long pause.]*
 Thou spotless purity, what fell despair,
 Cruel expedient, counsels.—It must be.—
 Ye holy pow'rs of truth, forgive the sounds
 Of pious fallacy.—Leave me, Alcander.
 Return thou to the camp, where glorious death,
 At least, awaits thee; for thou shalt not join
 My strange mysterious fate, and haply find
 A doom opprobrious. With resistless force,
 Some pow'r impels me to a strange attempt;
 And doubtful lies the goal; haply, to joys,
 Dearer than life, it leads; haply, to death,
 With blackest infamy.

Alc. And is it thus,
 O Philocles, that thou hast weigh'd and prov'd
 The mighty friendship, in our youthful hearts,
 That grew from childhood? Wouldst thou drive me from thee,

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When danger, as thou sayst, and infamy
 Hang on thy purposes? One common doom
 Awaits us both.—But hear ye not the sounds
 Of distant minstrelsy? The priests lead on
 The wild fanatic crowd.

Phil. I hear a burst
 Of horrid music, fitted to the season,
 Dismal and low. Soon shall the cruel rites,
 Abominable, unutterable, begin.—
 And will the blessed sun, bright source of life,
 Behold the murd'rous deed, and not recoil,
 As at the feast of Atreus?—Hark again!
 Fury has fill'd my breast. I could out-howl
 The frantic Menalus, and tear my limbs,
 With unavailing rage.—The priests shall bleed.—
 Aristodemus too.—All, all, shall perish.
 The sacrifice shall prove an hecatomb;
 Whatever noblest, best, Ithome holds!

Alc. Such bloody rites befeem not polish'd Greece,
 The seat of gentle arts, and virgin Dian,
 Sage patroness of female majesty
 And maiden worthiness.

Phil. No, fitter pay them
 At the rude formless shrine of Taranis,
 Stern pow'r of battles. Let him scent the blood
 Of human victims. Let him feast his ears,
 With moans of death and shrieks of agony;
 Where the wild whirlwind ploughs the scythian plain,

And yelling demons in the tempest roll'd,
 Rafe from th' expanse of sand, whatever springs
 Tender, or firm, herb, fruit, or tree, to feed,
 Or shade the kinds that breathe.—That strain again!
 Not hosts for battle marshall'd could appall me,
 Like this religious pageant; now, be firm,
 My soul; the moments urge thy crisis on.

S C E N E IV.

Opens from the Temple of Apollo into that of Diana, closely adjoining to it.—A solemn procession of priests.—DIONE, adorned with bridal robes, attended by CHORISTERS and MUSICIANS, and a number of MESSENIAN VIRGINS.—EUPHAES, ARISTODEMUS, EPHEBOLUS, TISIS, and the house of ÆPYTUS, with other MESSENIANS, attending.—An altar is seen burning, with vases and other preparations for sacrifice.

HYMN TO DIANA.

FROM star-pav'd mansions of delight,
 Come Artemis, serenely bright.
 Goddess, yoke the snowy hinds,
 That, from afar,
 On silver axles hurl thy car;

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And o'er the wide expanse of sea,
 The mountain-tops, the forest, and the lea,
 Waft thee swifter than the winds,
 Stooping from thy golden throne,
 'Till the solemn rites are done.
 Or, if on earth thy favour'd home,
 Benignant goddess, come —
 Whether in Pitane*, thy lov'd retreat,
 Or Perga, once thy chosen seat,
 Or where Miletus fees Mæander wind
 His sinuous course.
 Or, where thine amazonian band,
 Rear'd the tow'rs† with martial hand,
 That bright Cayster laves, while, from his source,
 With smooth and placid march he glides,
 And bears his tuneful swans, to meet th' icarian tides.
 Desert awhile thy favour'd home,
 Benignant goddess come.

Hark—heard you not the well-known call?
 Goddess seek Ithome's wall,
 Stooping from thy golden throne,
 'Till the solemn rites are done.
 The bugles sound, thy dogs are loud,
 The mountain-tops the sylvans crowd:

* Pitane, a city of Laconia, where Lycurgus instituted a sacrifice to Diana Orthia.

† In Ephefus.

Huntress maid, collect thy train,
 Amnisian nymphs, and daughters of the main,
 Gortynis, Britomart, with golden hair,
 Cyrene soft, and Anticlea* fair.
 And hark—they call thee, huntress maid;
 Wherefore are the rites delay'd.

Huntress maid, thy train demand
 A new companion at thine hand.
 While they dance in frolic round,
 Beneath their unshorn tresses bright,
 That float in wreaths of liquid light,
 Their iv'ry quivers sound.
 Where'er thy silver sandals press
 Exulting earth, she wears a festal robe;
 And healing plants, and flow'rets sweet,
 Huntress maid, around the globe,
 Spring beneath thine hallow'd feet,
 The laughing meads to dress.
 Not flaunting roses, as at Venus' birth,
 Be-paint the garish earth,
 But humbler children of the vale,
 The modest violet, and primrose pale,
 Narcissus, bending o'er the chilly stream,
 And snow-drops, fearful of thy brother's beam.

* These, with other nymphs, are enumerated by Callimachus in his hymn to Diana.

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Not for the sylvan war alone,
 Thy fire the shafts unerring gave;
 Or bade the cyclops at their anvils groan,
 Within the lemnian cave,
 To forge destruction for the beasts of chace;
 But to subdue and tame
 More savage monsters, of the human race,
 That nurs'd in violence, and deeds of shame,
 Where fury passions lead,
 The wilder'd paths of outrage tread.
 At first, the fatal darts were tried
 On wolves, that prow'd by hurdled cote,
 Where shepherds, with their flocks abide;
 Then madding Rhæcus and Hylæus smote.
 And still, when strangers, and the helpless maid,
 And feeble orphans, cry for aid,
 Thou art not mindless of their cry;
 But, far and wide, thine arrows fly.
 The fruits of earth, and produce of the womb,
 Are blasted all;
 Like wither'd leaves, the hardy striplings fall;
 And fires attend their offspring to the tomb.

Thy presence calls a blessing round,
 Abundant harvests clothe the ground.
 Nor taking airs, nor blight, nor cold,
 Nor locusts, warping on the wind,
 Mock the labours of the hind,

Or thin the fold.—

Where'er thou dost thine influence dart,

It purifies the human heart.

It chafes ev'ry low-born aim,

And each unworthy thought, and ev'ry sensual flame.

Domestic blessings crowd thy train,

And public weal exults beneath thy sober reign.

Come holy pow'r, thine influence feeds

The steady principle of glorious deeds.

Fair temp'rance, nurse of roseate health,

And patient industry, the source of wealth,

With thee delight to dwell;

And, call'd from forest wild, and tangled dell,

Aerial mountain-top, or cavern'd cell,

Attends the rustic nymph, sweet liberty.

Desert awhile thy fav'rite home,

Benignant goddesses, come,

Stooping from thy golden throne,

'Till the solemn rites are done.

Goddesses, come; thy train demand

A new companion, at thine hand.

[The hymn being ended, Dione comes forward.]

Dio. I feel the mystic strain; it penetrates

My soul. I come, I come, chaste Artemis.

No more delay the rites. I stand prepar'd,

To pour the due libation. From thy sphere,

Look down propitious—Virgins of Messene,

Now, gaze your fill, if, in your pensive hours,

Ye wish to keep this face and lineaments,
 In sadly pleas'd remembrance; for no more
 Shall ye behold the sister of your youth.
 And let this last embrace, my father, seal
 The duty which thy child has paid, thro' life,
 Submits to thee.—Distinguish'd, as thou art,
 For ev'ry patriot virtue, 'mongst the chief
 Of brave Messenians. I have ever held
 Thine honour'd name, my fairest ornament,
 Beyond attire, and wreaths and costly gems,
 And all that women prize.

Arif. My noble child,
 Look round thee, on these walls, and fanes, and tow'rs;
 Seats of th' immortal gods, rever'd abodes,
 Of thine illustrious ancestry.—They speak,
 They hail thee foundress.—See, preserv'd by thee,
 The crowding myriads, matrons, fires, and youths,
 And maids, and tender infants; all, in hymns,
 Grateful, shall chant thy praise, when to the gods
 They raise their voice, and eyes, and hearts, for blessings.

Phil. Break off your rites; nor, with a sacrifice
 Unapt, unhallow'd, mock the heav'nly pow'rs.
 Not such Diana claims; a virgin pure
 Must expiate Ithome.

Epheb. Rash young man,
 Forbear; lest death, with some new form of torture,
 O'erwhelm thine impious head. O fearst thou not,
 Lest virgin deity from the cold top

Of Taygetus descend, with sudden shaft,
To smite thy sacrilege?

Phil. No, heav'n be witness,
I would not interpose, with impious aim,
The feeble hand of frail mortality,
'Twixt fate and its decree. What Pæan bids,
Must be perform'd; but virgin Artemis
Claims not a mother's blood.

Euph. What dost thou mean?
Sayst thou, a mother's blood?

Phil. I shall unfold
A tale, which only this afflictive season
Could from my bosom wring. Know then, Messenians,
The plighted vows of love, from early childhood,
To fair Dione join'd me. When the growth
Of manhood had enlarg'd the young desires,
All that enlarg'd desire could crave, the growth
Of kindness yielded, and our persons join'd,
As had our hearts before; and we, indeed,
In wedded union, were but one.

Arif. 'Tis false,
A wicked calumny, from the wild tongue
Of hot licentious youth, and a vain mind,
By vainer hope misled.—So may the gods
Receive this precious offering, and remit
The forfeit of the land, as my poor child
In thought and deed is spotless. I refute
The tale of slander thus, and to the gods

[*He slabs Dione.*

Pour out untainted blood, a free libation,
 For thee, my country. Ye supernal pow'rs,
 Behold this gushing blood, how pure it flows,
 Ye, that can read the secrets of the heart.—
 Whatever high and solemn, ancient rites
 Of heav'n-taught worship know; whatever great,
 Awful, or venerable to the mind
 In aim or motive, thro' the boundless range
 Of human action lives; I here attest,
 That this my ponyard, smooching with the blood
 To me more precious than the wide world's wealth,
 To Dian gives a virgin, be th' event
 My daughter's vindication; and Messene,
 So thrive, as she is pure.

Dio. This act hath clos'd
 The long, long, course of thy parental love.
 Thanks for this blow, my fire; well hast thou weigh'd
 The merit of thy child, and vindicated
 From calumny unfounded. Sharper far
 Than thy keen sword, within my breast, I felt
 This young man's cruel words; that would impute
 A charge of foul pollution. If a thought
 Of sorrow could arise, to cloud the death
 Of her who saves her country, 'twere from this
 So barb'rous act, of him so well lov'd,
 The brother of my youth, who read my soul,
 Who knew my wishes, and their innocence.—
 It wants a name of cruel.

Phil. Oh forgive

The blasphemous aspersions of my love,
And vain desire, that fondly caught at hope
Of wresting thee, by falsehood, from thy fate.
Not the castalian springs, that bathe the lips
Of the pierian maids ; not snows, that rest
Unsun'd on Rhodope, are clear and spotless
As thy pure nature. The malignant sounds
My slanderous tongue hath utter'd, back recoil
On my own head, like bold impieties
Against th' immortal gods.

Arif. My darling child,

I thank thee, that with nobleness of mind,
A fortitude divine, thou canst forgive
The cruelty that vindicates thy fame.
I love thee more than life. Th' all-seeing gods,
To whom thy faultless spirit soon shall wing
Its blessed way, know, what my spirit feels
In losing thee. The blow, my fatal hand
Aim'd at thy bosom, thrills thy father's heart,
With sharper pang than thine. My days to come
Will prove a blank, a dream of parted bliss.
Thy pallid form, thus bleeding at my feet,
Shall evermore be present. Sweetest bud,
That promis'd golden fruit, and, had the gods
Indulg'd thee length of days, hadst dignified
The soil that gave thee birth. Oh, lost for ever!

Dio. Ye guardian gods, that o'er Messene reign,
 Accept this free libation of my blood;
 I feel, it is the price of victory.
 I pour it on the laurels that adorn
 Our warriors brows, and never shall they fade.
 And chief, my father, on thy rev'rend head,
 Immortal, shall they bloom. The gods, the gods,
 With care peculiar, guard thee. Philocles,
 Weep not; nor turn aside thy face, nor droop,
 O'erwhelm'd with shame; the gods have thus decreed,
 The camp expects thee; hasten to the palms
 Reserv'd for thee. Sparta shall bite the dust.
 'Tis past,—'tis done.—From woody Mænalus,
 To meet thy vot'ry, come, thou virgin huntress;
 I rise from earth.—Oh father!—Philocles! [*She dies.*]

Phil. Oh stay, chaste virgin, I will follow thee!
 In death allied, ennobled, and complete;
 Concord harmonious of our fates. One soul,
 One love, one sorrow, one untimely tomb.

[*Philocles offers to kill himself, but is prevented.*]

Euph. Hold, rash young man, what would thy frantic hand?
 Thy life is not thine own; the gods have lent it,
 That thou might'st serve them. For thy country's weal,
 Thy blood must be expended; not in bursts
 Of wild and senseless fury. If thy being
 Is irksome to thee, honourable death,
 In battle waits thee. Hark, the trumpet calls;
 Go seek the Spartan; bid him share thy grief.

Thy sword, in flamy circles brandish'd round,
 Shall bid laconian maids and matrons mourn
 This corse that bleeding lies.

[Aristodemus stands immoveable, with folded arms, as lost in thought, contemplating the body of Dione.—After a long pause, he speaks.]

Aris. And is this all,
 Ye gods, that now remains of my Dione?
 Your will, and cruel Sparta, not her father,
 Have slain this virgin. Henceforth, I renounce
 All joys of life, and cheerful haunts of men.
 And yet not childless, while the memory,
 Th' illustrious fame, of what thou hast atchiev'd,
 For in my heart the foretaste and assurance
 Of glorious victory, purchas'd from the gods,
 By thy devoted blood, throbs prevalent:
 Lives in messenian bosoms; thy renown,
 Thro' life, shall be my child; and, after death,
 My sole posterity. When future maids
 Shall in their songs, with timbrel and the dance,
 Resound thy praise; and say, 'twas fair Dione
 Redeem'd our sires from shame, our youth from bonds,
 From tyrant Sparta's rage, the suff'ring land.

Phil. Lead on.—Dione, may I fall in fight,
 A victim to thy shade!—But, should the gods
 To life and sorrow doom me, I shall boast
 To call thee mine; henceforth, my sole companion

Shall be thine image, source of endless woe,
Endless remorse, and proudest exultation.—

Enter, to them, a MESSENGER.

Euph. What portends
Thine eager haste? What bringst thou from the camp?

Mess. The spartan force comes on, in dense array,
So near advanc'd, that from their archery
An iron show'r within our rampart falls.
With loud acclaims, our soldiers call their king
To lead them on to fight and victory.

Phil. Lead on, o king, lead on to victory.
A generous chillness tingles in my veins,
Crowded from ev'ry part; while the warm blood
Marshals its pow'r, within my throbbing breast,
To man the heart.

Aris. Lead on; I will not mourn
My loss with tears. No common forms of grief
Befit the child of old Aristodemus.
Nor shall my daughter poorly be content,
With common obsequies, which times of peace
On vulgar death bestow. Sparta shall mourn
Her loss in tears of blood; and hecatombs
Of gallant youths must fall to sooth her shade.—
Lead on, o king, lead on, to victory!

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

POSTSCRIPT.

I MUST beg leave to subjoin a few observations, on the foregoing dramatic poem. I know, it will not please the generality of readers; and therefore, I choose to call it a dramatic poem, rather than a play. I did not wish to write a modern play; nor did I make success on the stage my object; had that been the case, I should have adopted a subject, nearer to modern times and more conformable to modern manners; for such are always more popular, than plots drawn from ancient history. It may be asked, why then select such a story? I answer, my education and course of studies have formed me to a predilection for the history of Greece and Rome, and, at this particular season, every example of a brave people contending for freedom, and struggling against insult and tyranny, must strike the understanding and come home to the heart, with peculiar force.

If the foregoing scenes should happen to please any readers, it will be the few, who have formed their taste, by an early acquaintance with the history, and a study of the dramatic and epic poets of Greece and Rome, to relish simplicity, and relinquish the labyrinth of intrigue and the glittering embarrassments of love and honour; neither the one, nor the other, of which could be retained, in a dramatic piece, founded on a grecian story; without a manifest violation of the costume. All the productions of the ancient tragic muse are distinguished by the simplicity of their conduct, and the almost total absence of love from the business of the drama. I can hardly censure the former circumstance, as a defect, in those who have been our masters in almost every branch of good writing; the latter was a consequence of the severe

manners of the times, and the distance, at which the two sexes were kept from each other.

Many readers will think, that, in this poem, there occur too many allusions to ancient mythology and tradition; and accuse me of a pedantic affectation. I must declare, that I had not any intention of making a parade of learning; I was imperceptibly betrayed into some of them and some of them I supposed necessary, to give the proper colouring to the dialogue, and to preserve the manners of the times. As to the subject of this poem, it is no doubt horrible.—A human sacrifice,—and, not only a human sacrifice, but the victim is a young and beautiful virgin, and a father plunges the ponyard in the bosom of his own offspring. I may plead, in defence of my choice of this subject, that the sacrifice of Iphigenia was a favourite theme with the dramatic poets of antiquity; that the event, which I commemorate, really took place, if we give credit to history; a circumstance that adds probability to the drama; and that it is eminently calculated to excite the emotions of terror and pity. In addition to these considerations, I beg to remind the reader, that, to judge fairly of any dramatic production, we should, for a moment, drop our own characters, and transport ourselves, into those of the personages exhibited before us. We are not to consider, how an human sacrifice would appear, at the close of the eighteenth century; but to recur back to the remote times of paganism, when such an act was supposed to be a solemn and meritorious exertion of religious zeal, and the awful means of delivering a people from the calamities of war, famine, and pestilence, at present, and from the yoke of an enraged and cruel enemy, in future. So much, for the probability of the story which is the ground-work of *Messene Freed*. Still, it must be admitted, however, that there is something dreadful in the idea of an human sacrifice: I allow it; and was so sensible of it, that I endeavoured to soften the ferocity, of such a spectacle, by turning the attention of the reader, from the act itself, to the motives. I have represented both the father and the daughter, as inflamed, at once, with religious, and political enthusiasm; motives sufficient to account for the most extraordinary acts, and, at last, the father does not inflict the mortal blow, which deprives his darling child of existence, until he is agitated by the influence of sudden rage; at the false and disgraceful imputations, thrown out by Philocles.

In the foregoing drama, I have observed the three unities of action,—time,—and place. As to the action ;—the fable does not present a series of events happening one after another, but a single event, produced by means of others. The subject of *Messene Freed* is one, and simple ; the death of Dione, by the hand of her father, which is supposed to propitiate the gods, and to redeem Messene from impending destruction ; the share, which Anthemoe, her father, and mother, the priestess of Juno, and Philocles take in the progress of the drama, are not distinct events, or episodes, but necessary subordinate parts of a whole, being so perfectly incorporated with the main action, as the indispensable means by which it is produced, that they do not violate its unity. The reader will perceive that I have been attentive to connect the scenes throughout this drama ; a precaution which is demanded by nature and probability ; and which, notwithstanding, is frequently neglected by modern makers of plays, because it certainly requires some additional trouble. I have imposed on myself the rigid law of endeavouring, in each scene, to give a reason, for the entrances and exits of the several actors.

I have likewise preserved the unity of time. I do not mean, that I have strictly confined the time of action, to that of the representation ; but, I have preserved the unity of time, in the more liberal acceptation of the illustrious Corneille and his commentator.—“ If we cannot include the action within two hours, let us take four, six, ten ;—provided, we do not pass the bounds of twenty-four.” And Voltaire says, he entirely agrees with Corneille. The action of *Messene Freed* is perfectly within the bounds prescribed ; it is included, between sun-rise and sun-set.—In the morning, the procession of virgins takes place, Philocles returns from the camp, and Tisis communicates the delphic oracle. In consequence of the tremendous response of the deity, preparations are made for appointing, by lot, and offering up to Diana the virgin who should make atonement for the land ; this must take place immediately after the arrival of Tisis, for we cannot suppose, that a measure of such public utility, and which promised relief, from the general calamity, would be postponed a single moment. Some delay, however, must be caused by the making provision for ceremonies and rites of such importance ; time must be allowed, for decking the shrines and altars, enrobing the priests, assembling the choristers, and preparing the urn and a competent number of tablets, inscribed with the

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names of the virgins sprung from *Æpytus*. All this will allow time sufficient, for the conversations of *Philocles*, with *Dione*, and his sister, and with *Aristodemus*; and for those, between *Lysiscus*, *Tecmessa*, and *Alcander*. *Alcander* may be supposed, to have reached *Ithome*, about noon; *Philocles* who returns, in obedience to the injunctions of *Aristodemus*, to the camp, having reached it, early enough, to send off his friend before the news of the delphic oracle had transpired to the army. *Alcander*, now, makes a very short stay at *Ithome*; for, having learned the dreadful tendency of the oracle, and the perilous situation of *Lysiscus*, and his family, as being of the line of *Æpytus*, he instantly sets out for the purpose of apprizing his friend, of these alarming particulars. Meantime, the ceremony of drawing lots takes place; and the sacrifice is postponed, by the intervention of *Tecmessa* and the priestess of *Juno*. All this happens, some hours before close of day; and allows sufficient time, for the two last acts; in which *Euphaes* again convokes the messenian senate,—*Aristodemus* freely offers his daughter, as a victim for the community,—*Dione* learns her unexpected doom.—her lover and his friend return, from the camp, in disguise,—the sacrifice commences,—and *Philocles*, forgetting his virtue in his passion, by his unworthy interference, precipitates the fate of her he loves. The only considerable pauses in the action are between the second and third, the third and fourth, and the fourth and fifth acts; and even these need not be very long; an hour for each would be abundantly sufficient. In short, the whole action may be very commodiously comprized, as I have said, between sun rise and sun-set. It may not be amiss, to remind the reader that the messenian territory was very small; and that the camp is supposed to be only a few miles distant from *Ithome*, the capital of the state; so that a person might pass to and fro, more than once, in the course of the day, without any inconvenience.

The unity of place, also is observed; for the whole action is supposed to pass, either in the temple of *Apollo*, or that of *Diana* adjoining it. Note, these structures were supported on rows of columns, and open to the view on all sides; or in a consecrated grove, or a large area, contiguous to the temples; so that, every part of the space assigned for the scene of action might be taken in at once by the eye of the spectator, in a theatre of adequate size, and with scenery properly constructed.

R O S M U N D A;

OR, THE

DAUGHTER'S REVENGE,

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ARGUMENT.

CUNIMUNDUS had scarce ascended the throne of the Gepidæ, when, reviving some ancient claims on the Lombards with which they refused to comply, he assembled a great army, entered the country of the Lombards, and committed there unheard of ravages. On the other hand, Alboinus, having drawn together a no less numerous army, resolved to put the whole to the issue of a battle; which Cunimundus not declining, the two armies engaged with a fury not to be expressed. The victory continued long doubtful; but, in the end, the Gepidæ were put to flight, and pursued by the victorious Lombards with such slaughter, that scarce one was left alive. Alboinus killed Cunimundus with his own hand; and, cutting off his head, turned his skull into a cup, called, by the Lombards, *schala*, and, by the Latins, *patera*. This *schala* or cup he ever afterwards used, at all public banquets or entertainments. After this victory, the Lombards seized on all Dacia, obliging the Gepidæ either to submit to them, or retire elsewhere. Thenceforth, they had no king of their own, but lived in subjection either to the Lombards, who were masters of their country, or to the princes of the neighbouring nations, especially the Huns settled in Pannonia.

Alboinus afterwards married Rosamund, the daughter of Cunimundus, which made the Gepidæ bear the yoke more patiently. After this, the Lombards assisted Narfes in delivering Italy from the yoke of the Goths; and, during the reign of Justinian, continued faithful to their engagements with the Romans. On the death of that emperor, Narfes was disgraced, and, in revenge, invited the Lombards into Italy. Alboinus, with a large army, and an infinite multitude of followers, invaded that country, and made a rapid progress, so that in the course of the third campaign, he made himself master of Milan, the capital of Liguria. On the reduction of Milan, the Lombards with joyful acclamations, proclaimed Alboinus king of Italy, lifting him up upon a shield,

in the midst of the army, according to the custom of their nation, and presenting him with a lance, which among them was the ensign of royalty.

Alboinus having reduced many other cities of Italy, at length marched into Umbria, and made himself master of Spoleto, which he made the metropolis of Umbria; and, erecting the city and its territory into a dukedom, appointed Feroaldus, whom he dignified with the title of duke, governor, of that district.

From Umbria, Alboinus marched to the siege of Pavia, which, at length, surrendered, after it had held out three years and some months. As this was a city of great strength, Alboinus and his successors chose it for the place of their residence, whence it became the metropolis of the kingdom of the Lombards.

Alboinus, now master of great part of Italy, resolved to establish peace and good order throughout the countries he had already reduced, before he made any further conquests, but he was in the mean time slain by the treachery of his wife.

The occasion of this atrocious act was as follows. As the king was one day feasting at Verona, with his chief favourites and principal officers, in the height of his mirth he sent for the queen, and, filling the detested cup, commanded her to drink merrily with her father. Rosamund, struck with horror, hurried out of the room, and determined to be revenged. Accordingly, she immediately discovered her intention to Helmichild, the king's shield-bearer, a youth of great boldness and intrepidity. Helmichild peremptorily refused to embroil his hands in the blood of his sovereign, till he was, by a shameful stratagem, forced by the queen to a compliance. She, knowing that he carried on an intrigue with one of her ladies, placed herself in her bed, and received the embraces of the youth, which having done, she discovered herself to the deceived lover, and told him, he must now either put the king to death, or be put to death by him. Helmichild, well apprised, that, after what he had done, his safety depended on the death of the king, engaged in the treason, which he otherwise abhorred. One day, therefore, while Alboinus was reposing in his chamber after dinner, Helmichild, with some others, breaking in unexpectedly, fell on the king

with their daggers. Alboinus, at their first coming in, started up, and laid hold of his sword, which he had always by him; but the queen had previously fastened it in the scabbard, and he attempted in vain to draw it; he defended himself for some time with a foot-stool; but was in the end overpowered and dispatched with many wounds. See the History of the Lombards, in the 18th. volume of the octavo edition of the Ancient Universal History. Gibbon, also, has related these transactions, in his florid rhetorical manner, with many embellishments and graces.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MEN.

ALBINUS, King of the Lombards.
ASTOLPHO, his Favourite.
FERALDUS, a General in the army of Albinus.
CONRADE, an Officer in the army of Albinus.
INGULPHUS, an Ecclesiastic.
BOVINUS, a Domestic of Rosmunda.

WOMEN.

ROSMUNDA. } Wife to Albinus, and daughter to Valomir,
 } King of Gepidæ, slain by Albinus.
ADELAIDE, attendant on Rosmunda, and privately married to Astolpho.
CLOTILDA, an attendant.

CONSPIRATORS, GUARDS, and ATTENDANTS, &c.

The Scene lies at Pavia.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Palace of ALBINUS.

ASTOLPHO and ADELAIDE.

ADELAIDE.

I KNOW not why I fear—this mystery,—
As tho' the hallow'd act that join'd our hands
Were somewhat criminal!—Shrouded obscure
In darkling clouds, and shiv'ring with the damp,
Th' unwholesome damp, of night; the hollow sound
Of our own steps, redoubled thro' the ailes,
Dismay'd our conscious hearts. Sole harbinger
To guide our feet, the fading star of morn;

Sole bridal hymn, the cock's shrill matin song;
Sole off'ring at the shrine, my streaming tears.

Assol. Wrong not our love, with such desponding thoughts.
What tho' the circumstance and pageantry,
That vulgar souls delight, and vulgar nuptials
Adorn, were wanting; the long liv'ry'd train,
The waving banner, and the white-rob'd priest,
Tapers and incense :—yet the nobler pomp
Of harmoniz'd affections, chaste desires,
And mutual thoughts, responsive, each to each
Attended; and a tuneful choir, in heav'n,
Our hymeneal sung.

Adel. By one pale lamp,
That feebly glimmer'd thro' the vaulted dome,
The haggard priest, scarce seen, stood at the altar;
With low and trembling tones, and mutter'd haste,
He hurry'd o'er the nuptial rite, and seem'd
At his own whispers scar'd; for oft he look'd
Behind, awe-struck; and, when he should have giv'n
The marriage benediction, his voice fail'd;—
Falt'ring, his accents dy'd away, and left
The blessing incomplete.

Assol. From human tongue
Needless the blessing; for the god of truth
Will bid the dew of blessings, from on high,
Rain on our heads.—This privacy thou know'st,
Alike unworthy of our noble blood,
Our breeding, and our honourable love :—

By stern necessity enforc'd, to shun
The vengeance of the queen.

Adel. Still in these ears

Resound her threats, that should we join our hands,
Her prohibition scorn'd, no place on earth
So distant or obscure, but her revenge
Should seek us there, and plunge in misery.

Astol. Nor will her threats be vain ; therefore, my love,
Let us conform with patience to our fate ;
The period may be short.

Adel. Thy will is mine.

Conceal me, where thou wilt.—Yet 'tis most strange,
That we, sole objects, should be singled out
To meet and feel a temper in the queen
Most foreign from her bent, by heav'n design'd
For works of peace and mercy ; day seems short
For her beneficence ; night falls unwelcome,
To stop the task of blessing.

Astol. Be assur'd,

No light caprice, but deep delib'rate aims,
Urge her to thwart our union, and 'twill need
Our utmost caution and reserve to shun
Her watchful jealousy.—Awhile remain
Attendant on the queen.—The shades of night
Dearer to me than morning's purest ray,
Shall bear me to thine arms.

Adel. And must I go?—

To meet so seldom!—I who feel no joy
From thee divided.

Astol. Oh, my Adelaide,
Must I then send thee from me!—But our converse
Might wake suspicion; and th' abode of kings
Is ne'er exempt from spies and whisperers.
I hear the king approach.—Farewell my love.

[*trumpet sounds.*

Adel. Farewell—farewell!—when evening spreads her shades,—
Thou knowst the gallery beside my chamber—
My lord! my husband!—

[*Exit Adelaide.*

Astol. Every blessed pow'r
Protect and guard thee.—Now, my soul, be firm,
Unaw'd by menaces, to blandishments
Superior hold thy loyalty unstain'd.

[*looking after her.*

S C E N E II.

Trumpets sound.—*The scene opens to a magnificent hall.—Enter,*
to him, ALBINUS, with FERALDUS, CONRADE, and other
Officers, us from a review of the Lombard army.

Feral. Oh 'twas a glorious pageant, brave Astolpho,
Would thou hadst seen our bands, in what array
They past before their king.

Asol. A force they are

To subjugate the world, beneath a leader,
Lov'd and heroic, like our great Albinus.

Albin. Too much of blood this sword hath sacrific'd

To the stern powers of war; 'tis now my care,
To 'stablish rigid order, and restrain
The hand of violence; in leagues of peace
And mutual faith, and blessed amity
To join my subjects; that this goodly realm,
Prize of my valour, may by wisdom thrive,
First of italian states.

Con. Thou shouldst remember

Whose blood was drain'd, whose shatter'd frames were pierc'd
With wounds on wounds, to win for thine ambition
This glorious prize.—And what is our reward?
Injustice and neglect corrode our fame,
As eating rust our swords.

Albin. I warn thee, Conrade,

Dispel the clouds that menace on thy brow,
And learn submission, when thy king is near.—
I heed not, I,—thy haughty looks, thy vaunts.
I know, retir'd in proud obscurity
And dang'rous privacy, on venom'd thoughts
And noxious schemes you feed, and then come forth
More fatal than the viper.—I shall teach thee
A lesson of respect; and in the dust
Trample the vanity that thus forgets
Thine humble value, and thy lowly place.

Con. And why should royal bounty, like the sun
And dews of heaven, fall indiscriminate
On worthy and unworthy?

Albin. False the charge.—

My foldiers are my brethren, all engage
My care, partake my bounty, and, if just
Themselves, should own my justice; for my eye
Fails not to mark, my thoughts to estimate,
My lib'ral hand to pay, and overpay,
Desert of every kind, but, first and chief,
The foldier's merit.—Thou, Feraldus, bear
Dominion o'er fair Umbria's wealthy plains,
And proud Spoleto's tow'rs;—on thee, Astolpho,
That thou mayst still be near us, I confer
Supreme command within the citadel.
Conrade, henceforth avoid us, for thy pride
Hath made thee hateful in thy monarch's sight;
And learn to know thy value and thy place.

[*Exit Albinus.*]

S C E N E III.

ASTOLPHO, FERALDUS, and CONRADE.

Con. Full well I know my value and my place;
Know and will fill it; for I was not form'd

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For station subaltern, to crouch unnotic'd
 A cypher in the sum of royalty,
 Myself unvalued, to give power to others,
 If monarchs look for service and allegiance,
 Let them be just, with equitable hand
 Discriminate their bounty, and reward
 Who serves them worthily.

Astol. And were our duty
 And our allegiance doubled, could they pay
 Our debt of gratitude?—Hath not Albinus
 From freezing climes, and an ungrateful soil,
 The Lombards led, and giv'n them name and being,
 A noble nation, on the teeming plains
 Of far-fam'd Italy?—So fix'd his pow'r,
 Nor foreign levy, nor domestic treason
 May reach his quiet state, which in short space,
 Such is his wisdom, for stability
 May vie with ancient thrones.

Con. Some hearts there are,
 That feel like mine, and know, that sovereigns
 Live for their subjects, not themselves alone;
 Their tenure justice and beneficence,
 By which they hold their sceptre,—that tie lost

Feral. Conrade forbear, for these seditious sounds
 Thy sov'reign injure not, but on thy head
 May draw perdition;—in our friendly ears
 They rest secure, but others to the king

May bear them amplify'd, and added fuel
Inflame his kindled rage, till it consume thee.

Astol. Unbought, unbrib'd my faith.—No injuries
Could make me swerve from duty to Albinus.
No, were it possible that he could prove
Unjust or cruel, my firm loyalty
Would every wrong sustain, and contumely;
Nor from his service shrink.

Con. Such language suits
A thriving courtier, and a monarch's ear,
No doubt, will gladly hear it; but the soldier
Must feel his wrongs, and should occasion serve,
Will write them with his sabre.—King Albinus!
What title hails him king of Lombardy
But free election of the conqu'ring host,
His instrument of pow'r?—The suffrages
That made him monarch, may the grant resume.

Astol. If valour, wisdom, and each princely virtue,
Merit dominion, and the Lombard crown
Were yearly, monthly, daily, drawn in question,
By suffrage of the camp; unrivall'd still
Would great Albinus reign. The soldier's voice
Unanimous would hail him king, as when
High on a shield uprais'd our valiant cohorts
Bore him above their heads, and to his hand,
In sign of domination, gave the lance,
With acclamations louder than the burst

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Of many waters from the riven side
Of cavern'd mountains.

Feral. Soft, behold our queen
The sad Rosmunda comes ; her beauteous eye
Drops ceaseless, as the sparry-fretted roof
Of some chill cavern. Dance and tournament
Can boast no charms for her ; and still she seems
To suffer, not partake the gen'ral mirth,
That plays around, and in her whole demeanour
The downcast looks of mild contrition wears.

S C E N E IV.

*Enter, to them, ROSMUNDA, She looks attentively at ASTOLPHO,
and speaks aside.*

Ros. Oh gracious noble form !—And can it be,
That stern Rosmunda's bosom, which the hand
Of misery hath fear'd, affords a spot
For tender sympathy ? And can those eyes
Sate with horrors, can they find on earth
Object of pleasure ?—Clotild take this purse—
Distribute half among the wounded soldiers ;
With reverential pity I behold
The vet'ran's glorious scars,—with the other half
The weary palmers glad, whose pious feet

Have trac'd the foil, wherein the lord of life
Was laid, for man's redemption.

Atten. 'Tis perform'd.

Rof. Go then, and wait me at my oratory,
Soon will the sacring bell to vespers call.

[*Exit Attendant.*

Thanks to religion's pretext, it hath gain'd me,
Some respite from the tyrant's hateful bed.— [*aside.*
Oh pardon me, good friends, if my rude grief
Insensible to earthly things, hath fail'd
In courteous language, and the fair observance
Due to your noble rank and high deserts.

Feral. Hail queen and sovereign, whose resistless charms
Unparagon'd, no less than royal birth,
Claim universal sway; the noblest empire;
Dominion over hearts.

Rof. Ill suited sounds,— [*aside.*
Sovereign and queen,—to me a wretched captive.
These royal ornaments seem galling chains;
And every circumstance of pomp around
An insult, mockery, and sad memento
To tell me what I was, and what I am;—
A being comfortless, from earthly things
Estrang'd; my sole employment, eve and morn,
The solemn office for departed souls
Whom the remorseless sword to their last audit
Untimely sent, but chief for thee, my father,
Good venerable king.—Wo, wo, the day

That saw thy slaughter'd corse, and left me here
To burthen hated earth, a wretched thrall.—

Feraldus, Conrade, pardon me, awhile,
Somewhat of import to our common sovereign
Lies near my heart, and claims Astolpho's ear.

Feral. We leave your majesty.—May bounteous heav'n
With every blessing crown your royal head.

[*Exeunt Feraldus and Conrade.*]

S C E N E V.

ROSMUNDA and ASTOLPHO.

Ros. Oh mockery of pray'r!—I must not know [aside.
Blessing, or good, or quiet.—I have seen
My country wasted; all the palaces
Where my forefathers had in glory reign'd,
Belov'd in peace and terrible in war,
Stain'd with the blood of those old faithful servants,
Whose arms had borne me in my infancy.—
Down soft emotions,—let far other thoughts
Inform my tongue.—Astolpho, well thou know'st
Why thus I seek thy converse.—Hast thou weigh'd
My former speeches?—Didst thou know thyself,
Thy gen'rous nature and intrepid heart
A sceptre challenge.—Some receive from heav'n
Imperial lineage; which is oft disjoin'd
From royal virtues; others are endow'd

With royal virtues, and dominion win,
And wear it nobly,—Wouldst thou wear a crown.
'Tis now within thy grasp.

Afol. I know the freight
To which thy speech would lead.—I must betray thee,
Or stain my loyalty by guilty silence.
But tempt no more the reverential pity,
Due to thy sex, thy beauty, and thy tears.—
Thy forfeit life —

Ref. And kindness 'twere to take it.
A tissue 'tis of matchless misery ;
Each thread surpassing other, in the hue
Of dire calamity.—Death were but rest,
A gentle slumber in the lap of peace.—
Yet, would it grieve my spirit to depart
Without revenge obtain'd ;—that only thought
Detains me ling'ring here.—I do not veil
My thoughts from thee, or fear that thou shouldst act
Th' informer's hated part. Thy noble mind
And gallantry would scorn to bring to death
A woman and a queen, and still more awful
Restraint on thee, a wretch most miserable.

Afol. The power of sex and beauty, and more strong
As thou hast truly said of misery,
Have hitherto restrain'd my lips ; but know
My spirit fluctuates now, 'twixt tenderness
For thee, and pity for thy woful lot,
And duty to my king, whose bounteous hand

Hath plac'd me high, and made me, what I am.
 He binds me to him, by the sacred ties
 Of boundless confidence and friendship, such
 As rarely bides in courts, and loves to dwell
 With equals in degree.—Is not his life
 Confided to my care?

Ref. I needs must praise
 Thine elevated notions, tho' they blast
 My dearest prospects.—Ne'er did I resort
 To thee, as to the base and vulgar mind,
 With fordid motives; nor have led thee on,
 Thro' hints circuitous, to read the purpose
 Of my dark thoughts, but to thine honest soul
 My life entrusted, and my dearest hopes.

Afol. I own the sacred power of confidence.—
 Protected by the name of guest, my foe
 Should stand beside my board, or to my ear,
 In confidence, commit the mighty secret,
 On which his being hangs; altho' his sword
 Had pierc'd my father's bosom.

Ref. Didst thou mean
 To rend my heart with recollections dire?
 As tho' I could forget!—A father's bosom!
 Oh ne'er shall I forget Albinus' form
 All black and grim, with dust and clotted gore.
 Matted with streaming gore hung his long hair,
 Or curl'd, like venom'd serpents, round his head.
 His right hand held a sword, that dropt with blood,

The blood that fills those veins ;—and in his left,
 The fingers twisted in the hoary locks,
 He bore my father's head, the comely features
 Distorted with the agonies of death.
 Before my feet, he threw my father's head,
 And the dire falchion reeking with his gore ;—
 Hideous with slaughter, in his mailed arms
 He crush'd my trembling frame.

Afol. Why wilt thou dwell
 On these black images ?—The heat of battle
 Had chaf'd his noble blood ; but, from that hour
 His love hath made atonement.

Ref. Oh profane not
 The sacred name of love.—Atonement, sayst thou ?—
 Love for Albinus !—better, mightst thou say,
 Vultures and eagles love, when they engender,
 With screams terrific, or the wolf and pard,
 Or shaggy lion ; when brute instinct goads,
 To whet their fangs, and woo their brides in blood.
 To his hated bed by force he bore me.—He—
 The murderer of my sire,—a captive queen.

Afol. His kindness since.—

Ref. Insulting cruelty
 Hath been his kindness since.—Oh could mine eyes
 Have kill'd like basilisks, an instant vengeance
 Had seiz'd the murderer.—'Tis thro' thee alone
 I hope for vengeance.

Astol. 'Twere in me disloyal
 To listen to such words. Repress thy hopes
 Of warping my firm faith.—This orb of day
 Shall in his orient chambers sink to rest
 Ere I forsake my plighted fealty. [*Exit Astolpho.*

S C E N E VI.

ROSMUNDA alone.

Ros. Oh when was virtue lodg'd within a mansion
 So worthy of the guest!—Oh beauteous form
 Adorn'd with ev'ry grace, and fairer mind
 Endow'd with all perfection!—Noble youth,
 Why art thou arm'd in virtuous panoply,
 Superior to temptation?—Good Astolpho,
 Lend me thine arm, give me but ample vengeance,
 And I will be thy bond-slave, to thy will
 Submits and unrepining. Feed my soul
 With ample vengeance, and the secret flame,
 Whose subtle vapour blasted all thy hopes,
 Extinct in blood, no more shall interpose
 'Twixt thee, and union with thine Adelaide.—
 Something must be devised.—Without his aid
 Vain, vain my hopes.—His station in the palace,
 As armour-bearer, gives him sole command
 Of all th' approaches to the tyrants chamber.

[*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace of ALBINUS.

ALBINUS and ROSMUNDA.

ALBINUS.

IT is not well, Rosmunda, thy sad looks
 And tears are calumnies ; they taint my fame
 As king and husband.—Know, that I should deem it
 Reproachful to me, were there a sad heart
 In all my Lombardy, and I had pow'r
 To cheer the suff'rer.—Look not thus, I pray thee.—
 Say, shall the pretext of devout observance
 For ever hold thee from my longing arms ?

Ros. Tell me how I should look ; if thou canst tell,
 How children look on those that kill their parents.
 Tell me how I should look, if thou canst tell,
 How wretched females look, when brutal force
 Compels the loath'd embrace.—Tell, if thou canst,
 How the survivor of a race extinct
 Should view the ravager, and the destroyer,
 That laid her country waste, and swept her people

From the fair face of earth.—My countenance
Retains the sad impression, which thy deeds
Have deeply printed ; and my lonely pray'rs
In mediation for the spirits rise
Of those whom thou hast butcher'd.

Albin. Cease Rosmunda,
Lest boiling wrath should overwhelm my love.—
Thy father sleeps in peace.—The Gepidæ,
Who drew their swords against me, are at rest.
So sleep and rest thy woes.—What I have done
Is past.—I haply now should bear myself
In diff'rent guise ; for I have learn'd to value
The gentle arts of peace, and feel the sweets
Of soft relentings, and domestic joys.

Rof. Would thou hadst known them sooner !

Albin. By peaceful off'rings would I expiate
The pangs I made thee suffer, but thy heart
Is like the rock, obdurate.

Rof. Like the rock,
The flinty parent of perennial springs,
It shall supply the never-failing source
Of grief and chill despair.

Albin. Thou art unjust.—
Have I employ'd the tone of stern command,
Or crost thy pleasures ?—No, my wakeful cares,
Oft, when thou slepest, have worn the night away
In schemes to please thee.—Leave thy pious rites,
And fruitless oraisons for parted shades,

And let me woo thee like a virgin bride.

Be this our nuptial day.

Rof. From death's dark house

Call up my fire, and I will praise thy care ;

Be that thy nuptial present to thy bride.

Make me forget I am a wretched captive

Bereft of earthly joy, and hope, and peace,

By thy fell hand, and I will praise thy love.

Albin. Tempt not my fiery nature—I have borne

Thy sharp reproaches, tho' like barbed points

They rankle in my bosom ; but beware ;

Attire thy face in smiles, and meet my love,

And deck thy soul in bridal ornaments,

Complacency and joy ; lest my fierce wrath

Awake, to curse thee with a cruelty,

More studied than my kindness. Love for thee

Hath sooth'd my rugged nature to a softness

Most strange and alien ; that with wonder struck

I contemplate myself ; that love extinct,

Tremble at what may follow. My warm soul

Cannot be neuter ; it must love or hate.

Between them chuse, and take th' according boon.

[*Exit* Albinus.]

Rof. Oh give me death, and I will call thee kind,

But Conrade comes ; his overweening pride

And fiery discontent, by apt incitement,

May work for my revenge.—Most welcome Conrade.

S C E N E II.

ROSMUNDA and CONRADE.

Con. Wherein may the despis'd and worthless Conrade,
A wretch most abject, so my sovereign deems,
Whose sentence none gainsay, deserve the sounds
Of gracious kindness, or th' enliv'ning glance
Of favour from his queen?

Rof. Thy valour, Conrade,
Exceeds all praise; and I have wonder'd oft,
That thy reward hath fall'n so short, compar'd
With thy deserving;—but 'tis still the lot
Of modest worth, and plain humility;
And silken gilded insects eat the grain,
The vet'ran's sword hath reap'd.—Some would repine,—
But time hath reconcil'd thee to neglect,
And thou canst bear it with a faintly patience.

Con. I may not boast the monkish virtues mine,
Forbearance meek, and dull humility;
Nor have I school'd myself, to grow familiar
With wrongs and contumelies, or to crouch
And kneel submissive, like the patient camel,
To court oppression.

Rof. Umbria's mighty chief
Grateful will own, thy meekly gen'rous soul

Contemns distinction, and in modest silence
Retires from view, conspiring with thy king
To give inferiors place.

Con. Oh spare thy taunts.—

Esteem me not the tame and passive thing
Spurn'd with impunity.—Haply Albinus
Forgets his tutor in the trade of war ;
Or thinks the sword, which trac'd his path to glory,
Sleeps in the scabbard ;—he may yet be taught
A diff'rent lesson ; tho' his subtle minions ;—
Feraldus, and Astolpho were oppos'd.—
Feraldus,—Umbria's chief,—my patience praise !
Oh he shall know !—before his partial lord,—
Ev'n to his beard will I proclaim myself
His better in the field.—With voice more just,
The world might praise thy patience.—Thou hast seen
Thy father butcher'd ; yet, in wedded union,
Liv'ft with his murderer ; tho' ev'ry plain
With poison teems, and earth's dark womb with steel.
Canst smile beside him at the feast, and quaff
The racy vintage ;—from what bowl ?—And join
In triumph o'er thy fire.

Ros. Detested thought !

No, I would sooner lance these purple veins ;
And, streaming hot, drink the dire beverage.—
What triumph o'er my fire !

Con. Thou knowst that bowl,
Treasur'd with care, produc'd at solemn feasts,

An human skull, which golden clasps surround,
And golden bosses deck.

Ref. I know it well.—

And learn'd, this goblet savage witness bears
Of triumph o'er a foe, whose name Albinus
With studied care conceals; and certain 'tis,
That with strange agonies, and horror chill'd,
I view the dreadful vase.

Con. And yet thy lips
Have touch'd the fatal margin, and from thence
The grape's red juice imbib'd.

Ref. By threats compell'd,
Once, and but once, with trembling hand I bore
This hateful vessel to my quiv'ring lip,
Thou knowst the time.—Oh, what convulsions shook
My lab'ring frame!—what inward horror seiz'd
My agonizing soul!

Con. Thou knowst not then,
Whose headless trunk to savage triumph gave
That horrid trophy?

Ref. Oh most sure I do not.—
But oft have thought some mystery lay couch'd
Beneath Albinus' words;—for drink, he said,
And revel with thy father.

Con. And, full well—
The truth accorded.—'Tis thy father's skull.

Ref. Most execrable truth!—Curst be this hand
That bore the fatal chalice to my lips!

And curst the lips that touch'd it!—Oh thou hell-hound!
 Inventive in thy cruelty, to join me
 In partnership of blood, in parricide!
 Oh vengeance, vengeance!—henceforth, right and wrong,
 Virtue and vice, and good and ill, to me
 Be all indifferent; and one only thought,
 One ruling principle inform my soul.
 Revenge, revenge!

Con. I too have what may rouse
 Desire of vengeance. My past services
 With shame and scorn repaid. Ev'n now, Albinus,
 With taunts and contumely chac'd me from him.

Ref. Agreed in thoughts, let us combine in act.
 My largesses and kindness to the soldiers
 Have undermin'd this haughty conqueror;
 And should a great attempt, and valiant head,
 Awake their spirits, hands will not be wanting.
 But break we off, for hasty steps resound
 Along the marble pavement.—At a time
 Of greater privacy, we may resume
 The theme of this hour's converse.—So farewell.

[*Exit* Conrade.]

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S C E N E III.

ROSMUNDA and BOVINUS.

Ref. Oh most rever'd, for thou hast serv'd and lov'd
My honour'd sire, whether the wasting sword
Spar'd thee in love or hate, thou only remnant
Of my poor countrymen, what canst thou bring
To cheer th' unvaried gloom ?—Hast thou essay'd
To bend Aftolpho's virtue ?

Bovin. Let us learn
The resignation suited to our state ;
A bitter lesson ; but captivity
Is a stern pedagogue, and will enforce
Submission to his precepts. From Aftolpho
What canst thou hope ? Devoted to his lord,
The vengeful murmurs of thy fierce despair
Are register'd with him, and, amplify'd,
Albinus hears them.

Ref. No, thou little knowst
Aftolpho's nobleness : that mounting soul
Would rise aloft where empire sits enthron'd,
And seize her for his own ; but gratitude
And loyalty, and a yet meaner motive,
A trifling gew-gaw form, a stripling's toy,

Prepond'rate more in youthful passion's scale,
Than glory's solid charms. But my commands
Have strongly interpos'd between his wish
And this alluring bait.

Bovin. Somewhat I learn'd
With this surmise according, from Ingulphus,
To you devoted much, but to himself
Still more, as is the spirit of his order.
In fine, he urged me to procure some moments
Of private audience.

Ros. Be it.—Much may grow
From what he can impart. I know him apt [Exit Bovinus.
For every mischief, meddling and officious,
Yet specious in his seeming, watchful still
With art to win some profit to himself;
And from my largesses, by pity giv'n
To feed and clothe the wretched, still some part
With him remains to slake the thirst of gold.

S C E N E IV.

ROSMUNDA and BOVINUS introducing INGULPHUS.

Ingul. May blessings like the dew of Hermon fall
On that fair head! Oh, good as beautiful,
The widow's blessing and the orphan's pray'r,
Like morning incense from the censer wreath'd,
Are offer'd for thee. May the peace of heav'n
Rest on thy spirit hourly.

Ros. Whither tends

This wordy prologue? I was told thou soughtst
My private ear. Say, does the sinking wretch
Extend his hands to me a feeble stay?
I hold myself the servant of distress;
Sole purpose of my being; and sole joy
I prove, when haply, with a lenient hand,
I wipe some tearful eye.

Ingul. Most gracious lady

To thee I am devoted; trust me therefore,
When, by mine order and my sanctity,
I do protest mine innocence — Enforc'd
By strong and instant mandate of thy lord,
Perchance I have offended, by an act
That countervails thy wishes.

Ros. Do not mock me;

Thou ow'st me not obedience. I myself,
A wretched captive in the mass of slaves,
Bow with implicit awe.—I am so curst,
The tongue of mortals or the wish of fiends
Can hardly add a pang.—If thou hast done
Aught that may wound my spirit, freely speak,
For, adding to my grief, thou dost fulfil
The will of heav'n.

Ingul. Commanded by the king,

A mandate join'd with urgent menaces
Of banishment, or worse, should I refuse,
This very morn, I join'd in nuptial bands

Astolpho to thy maiden Adelaide.

Ros. Why this is right.—Farewell the only hope
My misery had left !—I thank thee, friar ;—
Thou hast perform'd thy functions ; 'tis most meet
The king should be obey'd.—Henceforth, avoid
My presence.—Thou hast done the only act,
In the vast range of human potency,
That could augment my sorrow.

Ingul. Ill betide
The hour I join'd their hands ! Now, by my holidam,
I knew not that the business came so near
Thy heart ; or I had gone from Lombardy,
A willing exile, ere I had pronounc'd
Their nuptial office.—'Twere in me presumption,
To ask how these united wound your peace ;
But if you wish to hold them separate,
'Tis in your pow'r, and obvious are the means.

Ros. There's music in the sound !—Separate !—How ? When ?

Ingul. For some small space, in silent privacy,
They mean, as I could gather from their words,
To hide their nuptials.—Whether coy reserve,
Or bashful diffidence, in Adelaide,
Shrinks from the public gaze,—or haply fear
Of your resentment, may inspire the thought,
But so they have determin'd. She remains
An inmate of the palace, still on you
Attendant in her place ; with am'rous stealth
He claims a husband's rights, and to her chamber—

Ref. Thy grofs imagination with delight
Dwells on the wanton tale. What canst thou build
Of good or happy change, that may befriend
My ftate forlorn, on the vain fantasies
Of thefe young lovers ?

Ingul. Hear me, royal lady.—
My loving fiftter o'er an houfe prefides
Of Benediftine nuns ; on Adda's bank
Reclufe it ftands : when evening fpreads her veil,
Thither may Adelaide be borne.—My fiftter,
Obedient to your wifhes, will receive her.
There, undifcover'd, fhe may bide, fequefter'd
From the fight or fpeech of her new-wedded lord.

Ref. Oh how I love the lips that utter founds
So welcome to my heart !—Sure infpiration
Dwells in thy breast. Thou haft unlock'd the wells
For which I thirfted, and my foul fhall drink
The copious draught—'Tis here—oh glorious guilt ! [*afide.*
To reach a tyrant.—Adelaide remov'd,
Supply her place.—I have thee in my toils !
The filent gloom of night precludes detection.—
Yes, good Aftolpho, vaunt thy loyalty,
And ftubborn virtue ; thou fhalt be my flave.

Bovin. What virtue dwells in words that only point
At means to fever, for fome little fpace,
Thefe youthful lovers ? For, of this be fure,
Nor force nor artifice will long conceal
The captive Adelaide.

Rof. No long concealment

My purposes demand.—Seek not to know,
Wherefore I wish to hide this beauteous bauble
In the close casket of a convent's wall ;
But learn my will, and see it be perform'd.
Haste thou, Ingulphus, and prepare thy sister ;
And thou, with Hermenfrid and Agilolf,
Bear hence the virgin matron, soon as shades
Of night prevail ; keep her from speech of all.

[to Bovinus.

Ingul. Note you her looks, Bovinus ?—On her cheek,
A hectic flushing rises and retires.

[*apart.*

Rof. That bowl, that bowl !—Monster of cruelty !
But thou shalt feel me yet. Oh were Astolpho
Pledg'd to my purposes.

[*aside.*

Bovin. I've mark'd her eye :

Joy, long a stranger, hath return'd, to fill
The shining orb ; but 'tis a sickly joy,
Malignant ; not the clear and tender light
Of inward peace and gay festivity.

[*apart.*

Rof. Why do ye mutter thus, with stealthy looks
Of terror cast on me, as I were grown
Portentous in your sight ? You know my will.

Ingul. Pardon us, royal lady, we are gone ;
And count your bidding, in our zealous duty,
Already done.

[*Exeunt Ingulphus and Bovinus.*

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S C E N E. V.

ROSMUNDA *alone.*

Ref. Now, let the chaos of conflicting thoughts
 Unfold the fair creation of some act,
 That shall ennoble a weak woman's hand.
 Now shall I reach thee, circled by thy friends,
 Lull'd in the lap of vain security.
 Pause here, Rosmunda, weigh the dreadful price
 Of thy fell piety ; look down and ponder
 The dark abyfs before thee.—'Tis no matter—
 My father's shade, poor troubled spirit, walks
 The midnight hour,—and shall I not revenge ?
 His bleeding mangled trunk for ever lies
 Before my feet, and shall I not revenge ?
 Albinus' horrid form, full in my view,
 For ever holds his head distilling gore,
 And shall I not revenge ?—These guilty arms,
 Parricide that I am, in wanton folds,
 His murderer clasped,—and shall I not revenge ?
 I will, I will,—Let future times, that hear
 My wrongs and my despair, forgive the means.

S C E N E VI.

ROSMUNDA and ALBINUS.

Alb. Beshrew my heart, Rosmunda, I am griev'd
 I chid thee all so roughly.—Well thou knowst

My fiery nature cannot brook reproach,
 And shouldst not urge me ; but, I pray, let peace
 Prevail between us.—More than life and health,
 And glory, dearer far than health and life,
 I prize thy charms. Whate'er my kingdom holds,
 Of rare and precious, at thy feet I'll cast,
 To buy a smile.

Ref. My wishes are confin'd
 Within thy bosom, and from thee alone
 Content and joy I seek.

Alb. Blest be the tongue
 That utters sounds so kind.—Ne'er till this hour
 Felt I such transport.

Ref. If my words delight thee,
 Thou shalt hereafter find my deeds accord
 With their just import.

Alb. Wilt thou speak thy wish ?

Ref. Thy heart and soul alone.

Alb. A fair reply,
 My heart dilates with pleasure. My fierce mind
 Is melted down to softness feminine ;
 And I could weep for joy.—Oh, were my pow'r
 But equal to my wish, thou shouldst surpass
 Thy sex in happiness.

Ref. 'Tis in thy pow'r
 To give me full contentment.

Alb. Speak the means.
 My soul is all on fire to see thee happy.

Ref. Thou shalt hereafter learn what welcome means

May yield me happiness, when fair occasion
Serves for th' attainment.

Alb. In thine eyes I mark,
Transported mark, the lambent light of joy ;
A smile unwonted dwells upon thy cheek,
Where sorrow fix'd her throne ? What happy cause
Hath wrought this change ?

Ref. The prospect of delight
And full completion of my wish in thee.
My soul is rapt ; and ev'ry thought and care
Dwells on Albinus.

Alb. Let me hold thee thus,
And strain thee to my heart. Oh what a charm

[embracing her.]

Does kindness add to the most perfect beauty !
Long have I mourn'd, that while my love possess'd
Thy perfect form, thy soul was alienate.
Now come ; the banquet waits ;—the minstrel's hand,
With magic cunning plunges on the chords
To catch the soul of music ; but, nor feast,
Nor tuneful witchery of harp and song,
Can charm me, like thy voice. Nay, come my love.

Ref. I'll follow thee, anon.—But I am busied
In preparations for thine entertainment ;
I mean a banquet worthy of a king
And royal visitants, where thou shalt meet
An unexpected guest ; with anxious care,
I labour to prepare it.—Yet, one boon—

Nay thou must not refuse me. Be this night
Wholly my own, from interruption free,
To take a long farewell of pious rites,
Paid nightly for the rest of parted souls.

Alb. I can refuse thee nothing.—Thou shalt reign
This night, and every night thro' future time,
Queen of thyself and me. Yet why impair
Thy beauties with the damp and chilling breath
Of mouldy cloisters? And consume the hours,
That love and pleasure for their own demand,
In bigot forms and vain observances,
That profit not the dead and injure thee?
Adieu my love.

[*Exit Albinus.*

Ref. How sick'ning to the heart,
Sounds of endearment from an hateful tongue!
That bowl that bowl, my murder'd father's skull!
Can it be possible? And could these eyes
Behold, and know it not?—A daughter's hand
Raise it to meet her lips, and no kind warning
Within her soul arise?—O vengeance, vengeance!
Father be near, a monitor, unseen;
Sustain my spirit; let it not recoil
In woman's weak relentings, from the task
Of signal vengeance, which my matchless wrongs
Demand and justify.—My prayer is heard.—
I feel thee here.—O might I quaff his blood,
The tyrant's blood, from that detested bowl.

[*Exit Rosinunda.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

*An apartment in the palace of ALBINUS.*ASTOLPHO *solus.*

OH blessed orb, that roll'st serene and clear
 O'er this accursed head, what direful change
 Hath thy short absence wrought !—Adult'rer, traitor !
 Sure 'tis illusion all, and I may hope
 To wake for innocence and Adelaide. —
 Adult'rer, traitor !—O, my Adelaide,
 I thought thee mine, and to my bosom clasp'd
 Perdition.—Idol of these doating eyes—
 Deserted—rack'd with agonizing doubt !
 Where didst thou range the monster-breeding gloom,
 While I—close memory, close the scene ! What I have done,
 I dare not think ;—but sure, thou art at rest ;
 Thy death alone wants to the consummation
 Of guilt unparallel'd.—My royal lord,
 Next after Adelaide, dear to my soul,
 Beneficent and noble, could not fate
 Chuse other instrument to work thy wrong ?
 What dreadful choice of evils !—Sin on sin,
 Perdition on perdition.—Yet my heart,
 My heart, shall yet be spotless.—To the king—
 Sure consequence, I know my death ensues,—
 And can I wish for life ?—Not thou alone,—

No thou must doom that beauteous fatal thing—
 Tho' guilty as she is her charms and sorrows
 Cling round thy heart—Oh see her lovely frame
 By some strange torture mangled.—Be it—all her sex
 Shall perish, rather than my soul persist
 In deadly guilt.

S C E N E II.

ASTOLPHO and ROSMUNDA.

Ros. Stay ;—whither wouldst thou fly,
 Licentious paramour, whose daring sin
 Hath shar'd thy monarch's bed ?

Astol. Dost thou upbraid me ?—Oh thou sorceress,
 Thou hast so complicated crime with crime,
 One step advanc'd, I never can return.

Ros. My wrongs unparallel'd cry out for blood,
 With never ceasing clamours ; blood for blood !
 Nay, shrink not back, nor struggle to get free ;
 Thou knowst, by what I've done, what I dare do.

Astol. Yes, let me perish, so my sole perdition
 May fate thy malice ; but it will not serve.
 My beauteous Adelaide.—I see the murder's
 Glare in thine eye-balls.—Lo, with fearful cries,
 Vultures are hov'ring in the air around thee,
 And scent the steams of blood. Where hast thou hid
 Her mangled corse ?—If thou hast murder'd her,
 Those pleading charms, those graces, that would tempt
 The hoary hermit to forego his maker,

Shall on the scaffold perish.—If she live,
To pay my secrecy, discover instant.—
Say.—

Ref. Be thou patient,—Know that Adelaide,—
Wife thou no more must call her, lives in safety !
Let that suffice thy love.—Thou mayst not know
Whither she is convey'd, or cherish hope
Of ever meeting more. Thou must devote
Thine heart and arm to me.

Astol. First, perish both !—
I'll to the king.

Ref. Think not I wish to live
After revenge obtain'd.—I see the goal—
Ev'n now, methinks, I reach it.—But forbear
To menace or repine.—Thine Adelaide,
With studied anguish, exquisite, shall end
Her miserable days, if thy rash tongue
Divulge our myst'ry.—Think not I had dar'd
This doubtful act, for pleasure to myself—
Albinus perishes.—I do not blush ;
For ends exalt the means :—'twas piety,
Just sense of honour, and resentment, due
To brutal violation, that inspir'd
The deed of the past night—No light desires
With the pure motives mingled

Astol. Away, thou fiend !
I scorn thy power ; death has no frowns for me.—

Ref. Not we alone shall perish ;—wretched things

O'erwhelm'd with guilt,—but she, the young, and fair,
 And innocent.—I will to her transfer
 My hate against the tyrant, and believe
 I pierce his heart, when these vindictive hands
 Mangle that idol form, with thousand wounds.
 Then ev'ry atom, quiv'ring in the pangs
 Of multiply'd infliction, shall accuse
 Thine unrelenting soul.

Astol. And must I plunge
 These hands in blood?—Affail the sacred life
 Giv'n to my charge?—My king.—Oh never, never!—

Ros. Then, mark th' alternative; think whom thy voice
 To torture dooms.—Again, I warn thee, think,
 Think, on thine Adelaide; for I have sworn.
 Albinus bleeds, or Adelaide, with tortures,
 Elaborate, shall perish.—Instant say,
 Wilt thou comply?—Th' eventful moments press.—
 Still doubtful?—I am gone—and Adelaide—

[going.]

Astol. And Adelaide,—o can I bear the thought?—
 Thou vengeful spirit, swear that she is safe,
 And to thy fatal aims, with sov'reign sway,
 My being and my faculties devote.

Ros. I've founded Conrade, thou wilt find him apt.
 The subject of our converse hath ta'en root
 Deep in his soul,—He comes with low'ring brow.
 Thine are the keys of all the passages
 That from the postern lead,—Thou knowst my meaning.
 Awhile I leave thee. Think on Adelaide;

And look I find thee faithful to my vengeance,
Or—Conrade is necessary to the work ;
Cherish, and mould him to our purposes.

[*Exit.*

S C E N E III.

ASTOLPHO alone.

Conrade is necessary to the work !
What work ? What work ?—I am devoted, fold—
No place for penitence, for pardon none—
None, none !—My Adelaide, that angel form,
That angel mind forbids.—Why, why is this ?
An angel pure, confed'rate with the fiends,
Unconscious too, to plunge a wretched soul
Where mercy shall not find me ! Can I then,
My Adelaide, my angel,—can I doom thee
To—never, never !—here ends all debate.

S C E N E IV.

CONRADE and ASTOLPHO.

Astol. Conrade, I have observ'd of late thou holdst me
At an unfriendly distance.—Why is this ?
As far as my poor voice had weight or influence,

I still have spoke thee a distinguish'd soldier
In the first rank.

Con. 'Tis true—I cannot flatter ;—
I hate the gilded vermin of a court,
Hatch'd by the beaming sun of royalty,
That swarm in clouds before their sov'reign's eyes,
And so obstruct his sight, he cannot chuse
The worthy from the herd.

Apol. Oft have I mourn'd
That some malignant demon should disjoin
Hearts made to meet and love.

Con. The common language
And thriving cheat of courts ; with vague profession,
And glozing speeches giv'n to all alike
To win regard, tongue foreign from the heart,
With simple men, that words and deeds confound,
Mistaking the stale harlot blandishment
Of prostituted lips, for certain proof
Of holy friendship.—Go to, I have found thee,
And know thee well.

Apol. Thou hast not found me, Conrade,—
I feel as thou dost.—Villain, lying villain !—
What do I say ?—And, couldst thou trace a path,
Where honour might combine to raise thee high
As thy deserts might challenge, noble Conrade,
Thou shouldst not find me tardy.

Con. I will prove
Whether thou art a thing compos'd of words,

[*aside.*

Or what thou dost profests, a friend indeed.
 Such only I esteem whose sword, whose counfels,
 Whose ready life, are to the man devoted
 Whom he calls friend.—Thou knowst the king has wrong'd
 me :——

Wrong'd me to death.—Should I seek reparation
 From what alone is mine,—a soldier's sword,—
 Say, wouldst thou follow me ?—Nay, if thy heart
 Inclines thee,—get thee to thy lord ; reveal
 What I have said—'twill buy for thee promotion.
 Nay scruple not, for I am in the wane,
 Thou in the spring and promise of thy youth,
 The minion of thy master, and thy hopes
 Flow in a tide as vigorous as thy blood.—
 Why dost thou hesitate ?

Astol. Most wretched traitor, *[aside.*
 Caught in the stygian web. Now hear and wonder ;
 For know this arm shall aid thee in thy schemes.

Con. Heard I aright ?—Shall aid me in my schemes !
 Thine artifice is gross.—Fie, it smells rank.
 Think not to fool me with such shallow craft.
 Where is that loyalty, with wordy zeal,
 But yester morn profest ?

Astol. I well remember,
 And spoke most truly then ; but a few hours
 Have wonders wrought, and so transform'd my soul,
 That I am pledg'd and sworn to kill my king,

Who loves and honours me.—Nay, start not back,
 Know, I have left an hostage for performance,
 More worth than worlds; my bride, my Adelaide.
 Say, wilt thou trust me yet?

Con. Come, let me clasp thee.—

Oh gen'rous youth, I love thee with a love
 Beyond the love of woman. Know a scheme
 Of hopeful vengeance offers.—Souls there are,
 Whose wants and wrongs, unmerited like mine,
 Have giv'n an edge and temper to their swords,
 That to the quick may bite a haughty tyrant.

Astol. Inquire not wherefore, but I am full apt
 For any scheme of blood thou canst suggest.
 Who are partakers in thine enterprize?

Con. The fiery Raymond, Agilolf, and Ranchild,
 With hoary Hermenfrid, Odo, and Lothaire,
 Helmichis, Theophil.—

Astol. It is enough.

Enrol me in your band.—When do you meet?

Con. The midnight hour, in yonder grove of poplars,
 Convenes our trusty conclave; and this night
 Matures our great attempt, decides the time,
 Place, preparation, and all circumstance.

Astol. I'm pledg'd.—But break we off, for lo the king.
 This key commands the postern, and from thence
 A vaulted passage winds to his apartment.

Con. Farewell, remember midnight; I must hence,
 His sight is poison to me.

[*Exit.*

S C E N E V.

ASTOLPHO, *alone.*

Captive soul!—

Now look to heaven, invoke returning grace:—

Now beat thy wings.—Another limed twig

Shall hold thee down, and efforts all are vain;

That key confirms my guilt beyond recall.

S C E N E VI.

ASTOLPHO and ALBINUS.

Astol. He turns to me benignant; in his eye
Unusual pleasure beams.—I feel his looks,
Here, here, they sting me.—Unsuspecting victim,
Fate hovers round thee.

Alb. Joy to thee, Astolpho,
How fares thy lovely bride? I long to greet her,
And plunder from thy treasur'd hoard of sweets,
One gentle kiss.—How fares thine Adelaide?

Astol. As suits her circumstance, my gracious lord,—
I have no bride, no Adelaide.—Oh, torture! *[aside.*

Alb. Why, thou art sad; but such excess of joy,
As thou must feel, so overwhelms the soul,
It takes the shape of grief.—Ourself have prov'd

Excess of gladness, for our queen is kind.

When didst thou see her last?

Astol. Ev'n now my lord;

And she was bent on earnest preparation.

Alb. I know it well.—She gives a solemn feast
In honour of our nuptials.—From the palace,
Last night, by my permission, she was absent;
Reluctant, I indulg'd her.—In the cloisters,
She past the hours in holy offices,
And grateful oraisons to ev'ry faint,
Whose intercession at the throne of grace
Has made connubial love and smiling hope
To flourish fair between us.

Astol. Oh last night!
Season of horrors!

[*aside.*]

Alb. Shall we not, Astolpho,
Be truly happy now?

Astol. My royal lord
Deserves a happiness, as great and signal,
As are his power and place. Pardon, my lord;
My duty claims attendance at the citadel.
Hold, bursting heart.—I cannot bear his eye.

[*aside.*]

Alb. Astolpho, I am on a journey bent;
And shall not soon return.

Astol. Oh, 'tis most true,—
A long and dreadful journey!

[*aside.*]

Alb. And on thee
Devolves the care of needful preparation.

Astol. I am already busied in the means
To hasten thy departure.—Let me fly,
And execute thy bidding.

[*aside.*

[*going.*

Alb. Yet a moment.—
We mean a circuit thro' our Lombardy,
To stay the hand of rapine, and confirm
In these our now possessions, equal rule,
And sober ordinances.—I was known,
In early life, the blood-stain'd conqueror,
Fierce and oppressive; but my days to come
Shall be distinguish'd by the peaceful arts
And love of justice.—Seek the gloomy Conrade,
Let him attend us; I have been to blame;
He is a foldier, and a foldier's worth
I hold inestimable.—I have scorn'd him,
And left his merit withering in the shade
Of indigence obscure; but future kindness
Shall past neglect redeem.

Astol. Accomplish'd traitor!
His words are daggers, daggers, here!—They double
My crime, and in my pangs anticipate
The doom of future guilt.

[*aside.*

Alb. Thou dost not mark me;—
But I can pardon thee. Thine Adelaide
So fills thy soul and senses, thou art snatch'd
From things extern, in visions of delight.
Our queen shall with us; my fond soul is rapt,
And dwells in her fair bosom; and my heart

Vibrates to her soft voice, and dwells enchain'd
 In her bright tresses, like the flutt'ring bird,
 Encag'd in golden wires.—While bounteous heav'n
 Affords me being, never from my side
 May she depart.

Astol. 'Tis ev'n unto thy wish,
 For thou shalt find, while heav'n affords thee being.—
 How short a space!—Rosmunda will be near, [aside.
 With wakeful diligence.

Alb. I know it well.—
 Hasten with me to the queen, we will debate
 What needful preparation and attendance
 Our purpos'd journey asks; small state will serve,
 Where mem'ry and renown of noble deeds,
 And warm affection of his people round,
 Compose the monarch's guard,—and daily acts
 Of justice, mercy, and beneficence
 Proclaim his royal presence,—as the beams
 Of genial and invigorating heat
 Announce the glorious ruler of the day.

[*Exeunt.*

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S C E N E VII.

Changes to another part of the Palace.

Enter ROSMUNDA, with CONRADE.

Ros. Ev'n to our wish ;—Astolpho joins your band.

Con. If we may trust professions.—Yet I fear
His milky nature, and religious scruples ;
He to whose ears I have my secret giv'n.—
But never shall he his protection seal
In Conrade's blood ; this sword in his false heart
Shall seek for my deposit, and resume it.

Ros. Thou dost him wrong.—My life upon his truth.—
Partly not with him. Words might thoughts awake
That would unnerve his arm.—Let him not pause,
Think, or deliberate ; hurry on the time
That puts him to the proof.

Con. This very night.

Ros. It shall do well. To-night, luxurious feast,
With its attendant, vain ebriety,
Among the guards, in place of jealous care,
Will loose disorder spread.—The guests retir'd,
With few attendants, and even those o'erpow'r'd
With sleep and wine, Albinus will remain
An easy prey. Then, from the western tow'r,

A signal waving thrice, a blazing torch,
Invites your safe approach.

Con. We have by lot
Assign'd the several stations of our band.
Old Hermenfrid, with Agilolf, possess
The postern gate; Odo and Lothaire keep
The vaulted passage, from Albinus' chamber
That to the cloister and the oratory
Winds intricate its circuit. Young Astolpho,
For never will I trust him from my view,
Stout Helmichis, and Theophil essay
The grand attempt with me. My wrongs and valour
May justly claim pre-eminent to strike
The crowning blow myself.—I have obtain'd
Th' important key, that thro' the postern gate
Admits our trusty band.

Ref. Oh welcome, vengeance!
Long have I panted, in a thirsty soil,
Barren of comfort.—Copious draughts of blood
Shall freely flow, to cherish and revive
A soul diseas'd. Know, valiant friend, my care
Hath for your safety, and the full attainment
Of my revenge provided.—'Tis a cause
In which I could a martyr's pangs endure;
But, in th' attempt, to you shall not betide—
Go boldly on—perdition of a hair.

Con. Care of my life, or what may chance hereafter,
Hath never mix'd with my proud hopes of vengeance.

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Rof. What tho' his arm, like the fell thunderbolt,
 Smites once, to smite no more ; his trenchant blade,
 I have secur'd it so within the sheath,
 Shall harmless sleep, as charm'd by potent words
 Of forcery ; not all the strength of man
 Shall bid it flame on day ; then, in the moment
 Of strange dismay, and cruel disappointment,
 Strike ;—search the heart, plunge deep, and hide your weapons
 Within his haughty breast.

Con. There needed not
 This timid caution.—Death to my past fame !
 Shall Conrade owe to night and artifice
 A coward conquest o'er defenceless foes ?
 Who, breast oppos'd to breast, and point to point,
 Might cope with 'vantage.—Be it.—I must join
 Our trusty band ; for night, with hasty stride,
 Advances on us.—From the western tow'r,
 The torch will gleam more welcome to our eyes,
 Than lode-star to the pilot.

[*Exit.*]

S C E N E VIII.

ROSMUNDA, alone.

Rof. O farewell !—
 Around these towers the prescient ravens sail ;
 They call Albinus to the dreary plain
 Where vultures feast their young. Now to the banquet,
 To practise a new lesson, and abhorr'd,

Of fraud and blandishment, which from my soul
 Were ever alien.—Mighty conqueror,
 Go revel at the banquet, while thou mayst ;
 Enjoy the light of heav'n while yet 'tis thine.
 Yet some few hours, and I shall burst my bonds.
 Ev'n now methinks I rise in thought elate,
 And triumph o'er my tyrant.—Mighty things
 Must in small space be crowded ;—here they roll,
 Like the materials of the pent volcano,
 And soon shall burst in flame.—I come, Albinus,
 My lord, my father's murderer, I come. [Exit.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

An apartment in the palace of ALBINUS.

ASTOLPHO, solus.

EYE of the golden day, the purple west
 Shall soon receive thee ; and the hand of night,
 Thy shining portals bar ;—then what fell deeds
 The conscious stars may view !—I launch from shore,
 With murder at my side, in treason's bark,
 Thro' a deep sea of blood ; the boiling waves
 Swell fierce around me, and the rocks are nigh
 That threaten shipwreck.—O this dreadful war
 Of agonizing passions !—How the fiends
 Will drink the gore hot-spouting from the heart !

Soon shalt thou be empurpled in the streams,
 Oh savage hand!—And thou, my sovereign's gift,
 Depending now an harmless ornament,
 Shalt from my thigh awake, and flame to pierce,—
 Yet wherefore?—Adelaide, Rosmunda, King,—
 Chaos of warring motives,—which pursue
 Or which reject—how yield or how resist!—
 I am unequal to the dreadful weight
 Of my own consciousness, and all too weak
 To meet or shun my doom.—Forgive me then,—
 One only way remains.—My Adelaide,
 If I desert thee; but we soon shall meet—
 Thou wilt not suffer long, and death alone
 Redeems me from this lot of guilt and shame.

[Drawing his sword.]

S C E N E II.

ASTOLPHO and ADELAIDE.

Adel. My wedded lord, my ever dear Astolpho;
 How much have I endur'd. *[He drops his sword.]*

Astol. Nay what art thou,
 Shrill as the widow'd bird, that home returning
 Finds the nest cold—of all the nurselings rest?

Adel. Why did I find thus,—thy weapon drawn,
 Pale as some wretch, whose sacrilegious hand

Hath slain the lord's anointed?—'Tis no matter,—
 Since I have found thee, I will only think
 Of love and pleasure.—Yet last night! last night!—
 Oh 'twas a night of horror!

Asol. 'Twas indeed,
 A night of tenfold horror, night accurst!—
 Darknefs o'ershadow me!—Ye mountains, fall!—
 I cannot bear to see this guiltless thing,
 That comes to blast me in an angel's form!

Adel. Wilt thou not speak to me?—Thy faithful heart
 Bounds it not in thy bosom, as 'twould forth
 To meet and mix with mine?—Afflicted mourner,
 Pallid and chill from ranging in the gloom
 Of the dank night, uncertain of my fate:
 Perhaps accusing.—Yet thou knowst my truth.

Asol. How shall I speak?—How call thee mine? Event
 Most strange and lamentable.—What a change
 The hours of night and guilt!—Thou dost not know
 Nor can my tongue explain.

Adel. Musing I fate,
 And wish'd thee near, and told the weary moments,
 And each appear'd an hour.—With sudden burst
 The door flew open; I with transport rose
 Expecting thee, but, hateful substitute,
 That hoary monk Ingulphus, with a band
 Of scowling ruffians, while I stood aghast,
 Came round in silence.—From his loins the priest
 Unloos'd the cord, whose mock humility

Confin'd his hair-cloth, and my hands he bound;
 Then, lest my cries should summon aid, or wake
 Compassion, with my veil they clos'd my mouth,
 That scarcely life remain'd; and in this state
 They set me on a palfrey, whose swift pace
 Soon reach'd a convent.—Art thou faint my love?
 Still art thou sad and silent.—Knew I not
 Thy love and constancy, I should suspect
 This my return so sudden were to thee
 Unwelcome also.—Would thou wert at rest,
 Watching and sorrow have impair'd thine health.

Astol. Oh wretch, wretch, wretch!—Would we were both
 at rest

[*aside.*]

Within the tomb! Be confident my love,
 This heart is all thy own.—On with thy story,—
 'Twill give some truce to my self-warring thoughts,

[*aside.*]

Adel. My guides consign'd me to the holy abbess,
 Sister, it seems, of that false monk Ingulphus;
 But how unlike her brother!—My sad plight
 And piteous tears so wrought within the heart
 Of that good pious woman, she resolv'd
 To give me freedom; nor content with that,
 She added kind and monitory hints
 Of danger from the queen in Pavia's court.
 Then with fleet palfreys and a faithful guide
 She furnish'd me; and, as a sure protection
 From eyes or touch licentious, she array'd me
 In the sad vestments of an hallow'd sister.—

All-bounteous heav'n ! And do I clasp my lord,
My husband, my Aftolpho ?

Astol. Loose thine hold,—

Thy touch is poison—Those soft snowy hands,
I feel, I feel, them thrill,—they tear my flesh—
They burn my vitals—vibrate thro' my frame
Insufferable.—Wilt thou hang about me ?—
I would not hurt thee.—Off then, break those clasps,
Or thou shalt see me bleed—and bleed thyself.

Adel. Now heav'n have mercy !—Sorrow for the past
And transport at the present so with joint
Yet adverse tumult have possess'd his thoughts,
Reason unequal to the sudden shock,
Aftounded falls.—Look up, my love, my husband.

Astol. Thy love !—Thy husband ! Execrable sounds !—
No love, no husband, for 'tis man that loves—
And man is husband !—I am not a man ;—
But some strange fiend, some most portentous monster !—
My name is traitor, villain is my name !—
Love !—Husband !—Fie, oh fie !—Wilt thou hang on me ?
Nay break, nay break, those clasps. I know thee not,
For thou art goodness, thou art innocence,—
Off, off !—

Adel. Oh gracious heav'n, look down, with pity,
On my poor love, recall his wand'ring thoughts,
Dispell the gloomy clouds that have o'ershadow'd
The noblest, gentlest, mind.—Here rest thy head.

Afol. Oh Adelaide!

Adel. All gracious heav'n be blest!

He seems more calm.

Afol. Oh pardon, Adelaide.—

Behold me prostrate; groveling at thy feet

To sue for peace and pardon.

[*kneeling.*]

Adel. Wherefore kneel?

What peace? What pardon?—Thou wert ever true,

Kind, gentle, honourable.—Be thyself—

Recall thy hurried thoughts, and speak the words

Of comfort to my soul.

Afol. What comfort Adelaide?

It bides not in my soul, and from my tongue

Such words may never flow.—Thou must from hence.

I am not worthy ev'n to breathe this air,

Which thy chaste lips inhale, lest thou shouldst drink

Pollution from my sins; I am not worthy

To tread on the same earth, lest it refuse

To bear my weight and gaping wide devour

The spotless with the guilty.—O my Adelaide.—

Still this mistaken tongue would call thee mine,—

It were not good for us,—it were not safe,

That thou shouldst here remain.

Adel. I know it well,—

'Twas what I meant to urge. I know the queen,

Sole author of my exile, will not tamely

Brook my return. Each moment is a snare.

Afol. Why sleeps thy lightning, heav'n, while this curst head
Invites its flash?—Oh would I were dissolv'd
To my first elements, and scatter'd wide
In dust before the wind!

Adel. We must from hence,—
I have a kinsman at Ravenna's court,
Where brave Longinus, with the name of Exarch,
Supreme dominion holds.

Afol. We must from hence,—
Fly hence.—Fly far away,—in quest of peace,
And refuge from the curses, that besiege
This fev'rish vile existence.

Adel. Still his answers,
Are wild and incoherent, and his eyes
Low'r with ungentle fire.

[*aside.*

Afol. O Adelaide,
Hear me.—There is a journey, and a long one,
Which we must undertake.—

Adel. When thou art near
No perils daunt my soul.—But in thy words
And downcast looks there dwells, I know not what,
Unstay'd and fierce, unlike thy former mood
And winning graciousness that mark'd thee out
The darling of mankind.—Why chang'd to me?
If I have anger'd thee by word or act
My tears shall pay th' atonement.

Afol. Keep thy tears;—
Alas, they will be needed!—As thou sayst,

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Ingul.
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I am transform'd indeed ; but from what cause
 I cannot speak, nor is it meet thou know.
 Yet, thou wilt know too soon.

Adel. What mystery
 Lurks in thy words ?—Have the few gloomy hours,
 Since late we parted, been so prodigal
 Of teeming mischief ? Or the busy fiends
 So provident of sin ?

Afol. Oh, pity me !—
 I am the veriest wretch, the blackest thing,—
 Yet, spotless as thou art, thou hast a share.
 I see thee struck with wonder ;—but if pity
 Dwells in thy bosom, importune me not.
 O spare my tortur'd soul !—Yes, we will fly,
 Be sure of that ; and I am busied now
 In earnest preparation.—I conjure thee,
 By the chaste name, and bitter memory,
 Of our past loves.—

S C E N E III.

*Enter, to them, ROSMUNDA, attended by INGULPHUS
 and BOVINUS.*

Ingul. Now, by mine holy order,
 It is most strange.—I left her in the convent

In watch and ward, and well immur'd around.

I see the fiend most palpable.

Ref. Bold minion,

[*to Adelaide.*

Dost thou presume to mock thy sovereign's will?

But be it on thy head.

Adel. Oh give me death!—

Life is a weary load.

Ref. Of that poor trifle,

Thy base existence, we'll dispose at leisure,

As best may suit occasion.—Bear her hence,

Ingulphus and Bovinus, to my chamber.

I know what thou wouldst urge,—but ope thy lips,

[*to Astolpho.*

Or move a hand, to thwart my settled purpose,

[*draws a dagger.*

And thou shalt see this infant toy, this Adelaide,

Fall breathless at thy feet.—What, lifeless all?—

Will ye not bear her hence?

Adel. Wilt thou not speak? Not e'en a last farewell?

Astol. No, my foul breath wou'd with pollution taint
Ev'n innocence like thine.

Ref. One sentence more,
And Adelaide expires.—So, bear her hence.

Avoid the presence.

[*Exeunt Ingulphus and Bovinus with Adelaide.*

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S C E N E IV.

ROSMUNDA and ASTOLPHO.

Ref. Tell me now, Astolpho,
How beats thy heart for our great enterprize?—
Heave not thy breast with sighs, for 'tis in vain.

Astol. Most cruel woman, wilt thou not relent? [*kneeling.*]
I clasp thy knees.—Behold my streaming tears.
Oh let me fly with Adelaide, thy secret
Shall rest securely here.

Ref. For Adelaide,
A worthless thing below my care, whose mind
Is on the stretch of anguish and exertion,
I should not hold her, were she not the key
And engine, which can wind and set thy soul
Obedient to my wish.

Astol. Our lives to come
Would be embitter'd so with recollection
Of things most horrible, they were a boon
Not worth acceptance.—Yes, my Adelaide,
Yes, we will go together.

Ref. Rather live.—
Thou knowst not yet the treasur'd years of love
Reserv'd for thee and Adelaide.—Sole beam

That visits my dark soul, is hope of vengeance :
 Aid my great purpose ; let the tyrant's blood
 But flake my thirst, this universal globe
 Has nothing more to give, and I retire
 In death, or in a convent ; but an option
 Between them is not worth a moment's thought.
 Suffice it, I shall leave thee unconfin'd,
 As ambient air, to love and Adelaide.

Astol. Ev'n love and Adelaide were bought too dear
 With such gigantic sin.

Ref. As for the sin
 Be it upon my head ; the deed is mine :
 Both now and ever thou shalt stand absolv'd.
 Let vengeance but forerun my doom, whate'er,
 And I will welcome it.—Nay, look not down.—
 Say, art thou rul'd, or wilt thou disobey ?
 If on the latter thou art bent, behold—
 This, from thine arms, divorces Adelaide. [*shows a poniard.*]

Astol. Command thy task of infamy, of horror ;
 For thou hast search'd my inmost heart, and found
 Its secret avenues and sanctuaries.

Ref. No matter—thou must on.—I have acquir'd
 Dominion o'er thy fate. I know my power.

Astol. I cannot raise my hand against Albinus,
 So kind and bounteous.

Ref. Speak of him again,
 And Adelaide, without redemption, dies.

Asol. Let me not think, but hurl me down th'abyss;
That deeds may thoughts outrun, and leave no room
For reason or repentance.

Rof. 'Tis enough.
Repair to Conrade, and his bold associates;
They are already lesson'd in the functions
For each allotted. Midnight is the time.
With stedfast ken the western turret mark,
From thence a signal shall announce the moment
When all things are prepar'd. Meet me again,
Having conferr'd with Conrade, at the banquet.—
His chamber, scene of violation past,
Shall be the place.—But hark, redoubled sounds
Of hasty steps are echoed thro' the vaults
Of yon arcades.—Away!—Remember midnight.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

S C E N E V.

*Re-enter INGULPHUS and BOVINUS, from the bottom of the
stage, as in conference.*

Ingul. Most true, Bovinus;—were Albinus slain,
Tho' verging as we are, to the dark night
Of our disfart'rous being, we might count
Some bright auspicious hours. Our queen would fill

The vacant throne.—Her native dignity,

Her long endurance, thousand gracious acts

To sorrow's num'rous family, and chief,

Her bounty to the foldier, mix'd with words

That charm resistless, win the gen'ral heart.

Bovin. It well might be, with brave Astolpho's aid.

Depriv'd of that, far diff'rent.—Flight and exile,

But offer to desponding fancy's ken,

Consuming want, or servile base existence

On slow precarious bounty.

Ingul. Just thy fears—

I know him well.—He wholly will desert,

Or half perform, the task, and leave our queen,

And us who join our humble destinies

With her imperial fates, and on her trunk,

Take root, and grow, and flourish with her growth,

Or perish with her downfall, to receive

The wages of our purpos'd guilt; or pine

The martyrs of a fearful consciousness;

While he, contented with his Adelaide,

Flies from the court of Pavia.

Bovin. Why not then

Remove the fatal bar, thus interpos'd,

Between Astolpho, and the noble fortune

That courts his hand; between our royal mistress

And that support which seats her on the throne?

Ingul. Not many paces hence, and in our pow'r

This baneful thing.—

Bovin. I know what thou wouldst add,
 Thy dastard tongue deserts thy lab'ring breast.—
 Is it not strange, while unsuspected death
 May lurk in every aliment of man,
 Solid or liquid, that such multitudes,
 With being importune, shall burthen earth?—
 Why should this minion live?

Ingul. My tongue is slow,
 Yet shalt thou see my hands outrun thy wish.
 I have a compound of most sovereign force,
 To sep'rate spirits from the fleshly cage.
 Fearful of changes in this sev'rish state,
 And mark'd for firm allegiance to my queen,
 I bear it still about me, a protection
 From public shame and agonizing death.

Bovin. O precious draught!—'twill give our queen to reign.
 No more this bauble shall mislead Astolpho.
 Speech is superfluous.—Let Rosmunda feel
 Our zeal and diligence, and praise th' effect,
 Rather than hear, in long detail, the means
 That darkly work for an exalted aim.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

*Night; a thick grove of poplars, supposed to be at some
small distance from the Palace.*

ASTOLPHO, *solus.*

'TIS now the fatal hour,—and this the place.

Deep silence all.—Have I outstay'd the time?

Or sleep the traitor band? Will ye not forth?

Hark, the owl calls you, ye fell dogs of war,

To seize the mighty lion in his lair.

O blessed pause!—by pitying heav'n indulg'd,

To snatch my soul from guilt.—A whisp'ring angel,

Pleads in my bosom.—“Thou most wretched man,

“Wilt thou in presence of thy maker stand,

“And plan delib'rate murder?” Oh, my soul,

Timely from the dark precipice recoil.—

It may not be,—for how can I devote—

Oh, every way undone! my Adelaide?

Oh Adelaide, lov'd name, thou art a spell,

With pow'r resistless binding!—Rise, ye fiends,

And fill my heart;—behold, my sword is drawn.

S C E N E II.

ASTOLPHO and FERALDUS.

Feral. Why art thou here with night and solitude,
 And thy sad thoughts conversing? And the sword
 Gleams in thy hand. Say, what strange tumult shakes
 Thy lab'ring bosom? 'Midst the festal throng,
 I mark'd thy changing hue,—thy throbbing breast;
 Then on Albinus, while the mirthful strain
 Circled the board, with sadness most intent,
 Thine eyes were fasten'd, and the bursting tears
 Stood ready.—As with sudden frenzy stung,
 Starting you rose, and hurried thro' the hall.—
 All is not well.—I have pursued your steps,
 By friendship urg'd.—Speak, I may justly claim
 A brother's portion in thy secret cares.—
 Say, does thine Adelaide—

Astol. Oh, silence, silence!—
 Speak not of Adelaide—or I shall flame
 In most pernicious rage.—

Feral. Perhaps the queen—

Astol. Thou hast said true—the queen and Adelaide.—
 I pray thee leave me.—Thou must wonder much,
 To think the queen and Adelaide combine.—

They are the cause.—I have undone myself.—

Thou wilt betray me.—Can it be recall'd?—

Oh no, no, no!

Feral. Why---what should I betray?

Thy wild disjointed words would seem to point

At some dread meaning, but to me convey

No certain import.—Well I know the queen

Unfriendly to your nuptials, but Albinus

Will mediate peace.

Astol. He mediate peace! For whom?

Lie there, thou instrument of bloody treason.—

[*He throws down his sword.*]

Accursed arm! and wretched, wretched thing,

Outcast of men! Oh who shall mediate peace

For him, encircled by the gleaming ring

Of murd'rous points, all aim'd!—Short, short the space!

Hark, hark, the postern opes,—the hinges creak

The fun'ral knell of parting royalty!—

Feral. Astolpho, I conjure thee by the pow'r

That from yon starry concave hears our words,

And views thy strange disorder, truly speak.

I know thy spirit teems with dreadful things;

Though what, I cannot fathom.

Astol. Wretch accurst!—

Oh spare me, spare me!--Do not probe my heart.—

I cannot speak.—My Adelaide, my wife,

Is hostage for my silence!—Canst thou rescue

The trembling dove, when the fell hawk has pounce'd her?

Oh leave me, I beseech thee, 'tis too late,—
That fatal key has open'd wide a door
Leading to my perdition.

Feral. No, my friend,
I may not trust thee with, such wild companions,
Thine own distemper'd thoughts.—Wilt thou not speak?
Oh turn not from me thus.

Astol. Oh bloody deed!—
Behold, behold, they are about it now!
Feraldus, toward the palace cast thine eyes,
And view that sight of horror.

*[Here a light appears from the Palace, supposed to be a torch
waved from one of the turrets, as a signal to the Conspi-
rators that the banquet was over, and Albinus retired to
his chamber.]*

Feral. I behold
A torch bright shining from the western tow'r,
That rises o'er the postern.—'Tis a signal.

Astol. A signal!—'Tis a stygian lamp, that guides
The demons to their victim.—Now begins
The cruel tragedy.—Now, fly Feraldus,—
And save thy monarch's life.—

Feral. Take up thy sword,—
And join my steps.—If treason is abroad,—
Why stare thus wildly? Rouse thee, good Astolpho,
From this strange ecstasy.

Astol. Heardst thou not screams.—

Hark to the clash of swords!--no, 'tis illusion.--
 Yon flame is circled by a bloody halo.--
 Run--fly my friend.--Albinus--Adelaide--
 May I not both preserve? Come, let me grasp thee.

[*Taking up his sword.*]

I will not use thee, as at first I purpos'd.
 This arm may rescue Adelaide, and spare
 My soul the guilt of treason.--Haste Feraldus.

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E III.

An Apartment in the Palace.

ROSMUNDA, *alone.*

Shade of my father, to the banquet haste!
 For thee prepar'd, and by thy daughter's hand.
 Yet, o fell monster, wilt thou scorn the voice
 Of soft humanity?--Did he relent?
 Did fierce Albinus melt, when my poor fire
 Fell breathless at his feet?--Witness ye fiends,
 Lur'd by the scent of blood, attendant ever
 On his destructive sword.--I pledg'd you all,
 Amidst the revels of that night accurst,
 In the detested chalice.--Hark the sounds
 Of hasty feet, and the low dreadful murmurs

Of tongues that whisper death. Approach Aftolpho,
And let thy friends with confidence approach,
For on their pointed swords they bring revenge.

S C E N E IV.

Enter, to her, CONRADE with CONSPIRATORS.

Con. Fortune befriends us ;—we have past unquestion'd.
The moments fly ; they urge us to dispatch.

Rof. Albinus hath prolong'd unwonted revel.
He swam in mirth and pleasure. Scarce the cock
Could warn him to his chamber.—With regret
He left the strain of mirth, and blithesome carrol,
That flow'd spontaneous ; and on me he hung
With fondness infantine.—But have ye seen,
Your brave compeer, Aftolpho ?—He alone
Of all your band is wanting.

Con. Curses on him.—
Oh that this arm could find him.—I foretold
That thus 'twould hap.—His treachery or fear
Betrays us to the tyrant,—if we linger.—
Our safety lies in vig'rous promptitude.

Rof. Dispose yourselves around the adjoining chamber ;
It leads, sole outlet, to the vaulted passage
And postern gate ;—Albinus soon will come.

Let some remain to guard the important pass;
 Some, in due time, obedient to my call,
 Rush forth at once, and raise, for me and justice,
 Their puissant arms.—Should he attempt to fly,
 Your friends receive him:—from the roof within
 A lamp depends, which, having mark'd their prey,
 Let them extinguish; it would only aid
 Escape from their keen swords, or glare detection,
 Should succours intervene.—Might I become
 All ear, and shoot my spirit thro' the gloom,
 To drink the glorious sounds of chastisement!
 But hark,—Albinus comes.—Retire my friends.

[*Exeunt Conrade and Conspirators.*]

SCENE V.

ROSMUNDA and ALBINUS.

Alb. The waning moon hath ris'n, the night grows old,
 Hasten to my chamber.

Ros. Night is young enough
 For what I purpose.—Thou no more shalt see me
 The joyless object of licentious will,
 Deck'd like a victim for the sacrifice
 Of brutal appetite.—Oh spare my eyes.

Hence to the banquet.—Hark, the minstrels call!

Go take thy goblet, for the mantling wine

Invites thee.—Mark,—it is my father's skull.

Albin. Oh thou most changeful of thy changeful sex!

Where are the smiles that dimpled on thy cheek,

And soothing words, and winning blandishments,

That deck'd thee round, like wreaths of vernal flow'rs,

And melted down my soul in floods of joy?

Defiance now, and stern vindictive pride,

Glare in thy fiery eyes. On thy pale cheek

Sits haggard rage, and on thy quiv'ring lip,

Ready for utterance, dwell the venom'd shafts

Of insult and reproaches.

[Trumpet sounds an alarm at a distance.]

Ha!—what means

This warlike messenger, whose brazen voice

Invades the hour of silence and repose?

This is thy work,—oh most pernicious woman!

I feel—I am betray'd.

Ros. No more the time,

Disimulation needs.—No more my soul,

Dishonour'd like this body, wears a mask;

It casts the hated weeds;—it shines renew'd,

A serpent wing'd, to sting thee to the heart.

A woman's hand may reach thee, haughty chief,

Pamper'd with blood, and swoln with pow'r and pride.

Alb. My sword, in slaughter vers'd, hath never yet

Been stain'd with woman's blood, or thou shouldst feel.—

Dar'st thou to menace?—But in darkling hint
Why veil thy purpose?

Rof. Deeds shall soon explain

The purport of my words.—Come forth, my friends.

S C E N E. VI.

Enter CONSPIRATORS and surround ALBINUS.

Rof. Remember now the goblet,—now for vengeance!—
Shade of my murder'd sire, receive thy victim.

[They fall on Albinus.]

Alb. Villains, traitors!—Come forth my trusty sword,—
What magic force confines thee to thy mansion?

Rof. He is unarm'd,—repeat the blow,—strike home
For me, for justice, and for Valomir.

Alb. Give me a sword, and set me on the plain,
Where battle free may range; tenfold your force
Should sink before me.

[Exeunt Albinus and Conspirators.]

[Conspirators within.]

Oh pursue him,—strike him down,

Let him not gain the cloisters.

[clashing of swords.]

[Trumpet sounds again, nearer.]

Con. I am slain.

[*within.*

Accursed fate!—

Rof. Despair! despair! despair!

It was bold Conrade's voice,—and he hath fall'n,—
My champion, my sole hope, since false Astolpho
Deserts my cause.—Oh should the tyrant scape,—
On earth I'll sit and meet my doom.—'Tis strange,—
I gave him to their hands a certain prey,
Rest of defence; not all the strength of man
Could draw his falchion forth.—Be still my heart,
Thou mayst not leave thy cell to fly abroad
In quest of destiny.—What sudden burst?—
Is it my tyrant or deliverer?
Oh agonizing fear.—Ha,—they approach,—
Well thought on, faithful friend, no outrage, now,

[*draws a dagger.*

Can touch Rosmunda.—Hift,—'twas the howling wind
Thro' the dark cells and vaulted passages.—

S C E N E VII.

Enter, to her, ASTOLPHO, his sword drawn and bloody.

My conqueror, my deliverer,—welcome, welcome!
Unjustly I accus'd thee of desertion.

The tyrant is laid low, eternal blessings
On thy victorious head.—How beautiful
Dost thou appear, thy valour blazon'd thus
In characters of blood,—the tyrant's blood.

Afol. Thy praises are reproaches.—I disclaim them,
The plume of war, is trampled in the dust,
The soldier's boast and pattern, but my soul
Was spar'd such deadly guilt.—Too late I came,
Or this devoted bosom, interpos'd,
Had for my sov'reign bled.—By Conrade's hand
He died;—the traitor spurn'd him as he lay;—
Not long to triumph, for my falchion reach'd
The scowling caitiff, and he bit the dust.
The brave Feraldus with a loyal band,
Pursues his guilty comrades.

Rof. 'Tis enough,—
No matter, by what hand, since he is slain,
The murderer of my father.—Blood for blood.—
Earth has no more to give, nor I to hope;
So farewell to his shade, and to my wrongs.

Afol. Where is my Adelaide?—O bring her forth,
Sole tie that binds me to this vile existence.

Rof. Yes, take thy bride,—tho', yielding up thy love,
I must forego thine aid, my only hope
Of sure protection in the present streight;
Yet take thine Adelaide and go in peace.

[*She goes to the side of the stage and calls.*]

Come forth Bovinus.—To her husband's arms
Restore thy beauteous charge.

S C E N E VIII.

BOVINUS enters, leading in ADELAIDE.

Bovin. Behold her here,—

Yet shalt not thou poor queen, deserted, helpless,

[*aside.*

Nor thy two faithful creatures, to the rage

Of proud Albinus' minions, stand exposed.

[*exit.*

Adel. Oh take me to thine heart, my Adelaide.

Fly from this place. Horror, sits on the roof,

With harpy face and talons ; from her jaws

Redundant gore, empurpling all the walls,

O'erflows the pavement.—Hark the shrieks of pain,

And groans of death !—at ev'ry step I tread,

O'er breathless bodies stumbling as I go,

I spurn the mangled limbs and gory visage.—

Treason and vengeance, with their cruel train,

And vain remorse, and ev'ry hateful fiend,

Bide here,—nor ev'n thy purity can scape.

Adel. Dear to my arms, dearer if possible

For separation, why this hurried tone

Of falt'ring horror ?—Thou art deadly pale,

Thy fiery eyes are sunk within their orbs.—

Where hast thou been ? What hast thou done Astolpho ?
 Why, this is blood !—Oh gracious heav'n, look down,
 And pity me most wretched !—What new woes ?—
 Thy hands are crimson'd,—all thy face and garments
 Stain'd horrid,—and thy footsteps mark'd in gore.

Astol. The monarch and the rebel mix'd, in death,
 Their hostile blood, and it hath stain'd me thus.—
 Speak not.—This house is the retreat of fiends
 And mortals their sad thralls.—Fly while thou mayst.

Adel. Yes, if my fears will let me.—But my knees
 Tremble beneath my weight,—around my heart
 A strange oppression dwells.—I will, in all things,
 Submissive to thy wish, confine my lips,
 And thought, and working fancy.—if my pow'r
 Can thought excursive rein.—I'll not ev'n ask,
 Why bloody thus, with pale and haggard look.—

Ros. Thou hast thy husband, and thy life is spar'd ;
 Be satisfied with that, and get thee hence.

Adel. Come then, Astolpho, let us leave this place.—
 And try, if we can reach some calm abode,
 Where happiness resides ; if here on earth
 She may be found,—or only lives in song,
 And visionary fiction, fram'd by bards,
 Delusive. But I may not doubt ; with thee,
 Astolpho, is her seat.—Ah me,—my heart
 Is sick to death.—The forms of things recede,—
 With floating colours ting'd.—Earth, earth, dissolves
 In subtle air, and, unsupported, leaves me.

[*sinking.*]

Astol. The hand of death is on her.—heav'n resumes
The precious boon, of which I was unworthy.

Adel. A black abyfs receives me.—My Astolpho—
Where art thou?—I can hear thy voice, it sounds
Not distant, but no more I see thy face,—
Give me thy hand,—that I, in death, may prefs
And strain it to an heart, that soon will cease
To beat,—and print my clay cold kisses on it.—
Oh save me,—hold me,—thousand ugly forms
Would tear thee from me.—O farewell. [dies.

Astol. Gone,—gone,—
Oh what am I become,—burst, burst, ye clouds
And whelm me in a deluge!—Curfed woman,
In all destructive; these are thy fell arts,
To draw me to thy snares.—Thy hated life,
Oh most pernicious, shall atone. [drawing his sword.

Rof. Strike then,—
And free my soul from its detested prison.

Astol. I cannot strike thee,—tho' thou hast deserv'd
Death at my hand, for thou hast kill'd my soul,—
No,—be thy crimes thy punishment.—Be curst,
As thou hast made Astolpho, drawn, by thee,
From the contented peaceful happy state
Ev'n saints might envy. [drops his sword.

Rof. Black, indeed, my crimes,—
But add not to the catalogue the fate
Of this unfortunate.—I am a woman
Wrong'd, fierce, vindictive,—but I do not war

With love and innocence.—No, heav'n be witness,—
 If I may use, without impiety,
 That sacred name,—I know not whence, or how,
 This mortal stroke hath reach'd thee.

S C E N E IX.

Enter, to them, INGULPHUS.

Ingul. A furious crowd beset the palace gates,
 Demanding vengeance for Albinus slain,—
 Alas for mercy!—The grim form of death
 Glares full before me.

Rof. View that lifeless corse,
 Thus beautiful in death,—'twas Adelaide.—
 Albinus too, that royal gallant soldier,—
 He is no more,—and I, who speak this moment,
 To chide thy fears,—the next shall sink for ever
 Silent and pale—and fearst thou for thyself?
 An insect crawling from the moulder'd vaults
 Of some dank cloister?—Oh, for shame, for shame!
 Thy wretched sand of life hath yet to run
 But some few hours, and fearst thou for that remnant
 Of poor despis'd existence?

S C E N E X.

Enter, to them, FERALDUS with guards and BOVINUS prisoner.

Feral. Mighty chief,
Invincible in fight, how art thou fall'n,
By bosom serpents stung!—Arrest that monk.

[guards seize Ingulphus.]

Hence to the dungeon with him,—there, in chains,
To join the hoary colleague of his guilt,
'Till, by the doom of law, a shameful death
Shall, on the scaffold, expiate their crimes.

[they are led away to prison.]

Rouse, good Astolpho, and prepare thyself
To meet thy fortunes.—Know with voice conjoin'd,
Thy virtues and thy inborn nobleness
Demand the second place, the soldiers call me
To fill the vacant throne.

Astol. Look there,—look there,—
That corse, all eloquent, shall answer for me
A firm denial,—for the hand of death,
That rest my only blessing, hath ordain'd
Divorce from earthly things.—To me the world

Nor change of fortune can unfold, nor show
 Difference of things, but unadulterate ill.
 Nor city's wall, nor smiling haunt of men,
 Nor hallow'd temple, shall my curst head
 From this fell moment shelter.—Dens of beasts,
 Delv'd in the mountain's side, shall be my home :—
 Accurst be thy revenge !—Accurst thy sex, [to Rosmunda.
 Since Adelaide is gone ! [Exit.

Feral. For thee, tho' chief in guilt, most wretched woman,
 [to Rosmunda.

Thy charms and royal lineage, both adorn'd
 With female virtues, ere this fatal hour ;
 Offended justice stop, in mid career,
 And bid thee live.—Depart the Lombard state,
 While yet our pow'r, from popular assault,
 Assures thy forfeit life ; and with thee bear
 The mem'ry and example of thy crimes.

Ros. Thou meanst a kindness.—I disdain the boon.
 Why do thy ministers of wrath delay ?
 On to the scaffold.—I shall deem that station
 A prouder exaltation than a throne.

Feral. No, live.—And if existence be a curse,
 Endure it for thy crimes,——but if a good,
 'Tis to thy beauty and thy sorrows giv'n,
 Which ever to the soldier's feeling heart
 Plead with resistless organs.—Pardon not,——
 We must be busied in funereal rites
 And mournful honours, for our parted hero. [Exeunt omnes.

E P I L O G U E,

TO THIS

COLLECTION OF POEMS:

IN

TWO EPISTLES.

No
To
Ad
Th
Wh
Th
A

EPISTLE TO A FRIEND,
WITH A COPY OF
OFFA AND ETHELBERT;
OR, THE
SAXON PRINCES,
A
TRAGEDY.

Tibi nunc hortante camænâ
Excutienda damus præcordia, quantaque nostræ
Pars tua sit Cornute, animæ, tibi dulcis amice
Ostendisse juvat.

PERSIUS.

TH' excursive muse, that various walks hath try'd,
Now first essays to march in buskin'd pride.
To thee, my friend, whose partial eyes alone,
Adorn my works, with merit not their own,
This trifle goes ;—no trifle, could it speak,
Where language fails me and all words are weak,
The love I bear thee in my secret mind,
A love, beyond the love of womankind,

Unchang'd by fortune, unallay'd by time,
Thro' space united, warm as in our prime.

Pair'd from th' almighty's hand our spirits came,
Instinct with portions of a kindred flame.
From earliest being, they were join'd in love,
Ere yet for flesh they left the abodes above.
At our first meeting, each the other knew,
And, mind to mind, with fiery instinct flew.
And, from that moment, in themselves retire,
At friendship's fane, to feed the vestal fire.
Nor light caprices, an unhallow'd train;
Nor hateful jealousies the rites profane.

Most friendships, like our bodies, rise to day
Fraught with the principles of their decay;
We feed, with vital air and daily food,
Th' essential poison, that our frames include,
And friendships, so miscall'd, of vulgar life,
But hoard materials for the future strife,
The confidences, leading to distrust,
And services, that make upbraidings just.
Not such our friendship; all the worth is thine,
To feel and venerate that worth, be mine.
From base pursuits thy life was ever clear;
No guilty secrets, for a conscious ear,
Nor vicious aims that needed base allies,
Nor mental foreshadowings, that shunn'd discerning eyes.
Still, in thy soul, with rev'rent awe I trace,
Sublime simplicity's majestic grace.

The path of being, fearless, thou hast trod,
 Open to man, as to thyself and god.
 With ev'ry virtue, chiefly truth, adorn'd,
 Thine honest pride has affectation scorn'd;
 Rich and contented in the mental store,
 Ne'er sought to make it better seem, or more;
 For gaudy days, while others prank'd them forth,
 With borrow'd wisdom, and affected worth,
 And forward ignorance, with vain parade,
 And pedlar's art, her little wares display'd;
 And fought, nor fought without success, to pass
 Her gilded counters, and her colour'd glass,
 For sterling coin and jewels, on the fry
 That cheaply praise, they know not what, nor why;
 Thou ne'er wast tempted, from thy state to bend,
 Or midst the crowd for dirty palms contend;
 Thou didst not swol'n with index learning sit,
 Nor thrid reviews, for pennyworths of wit.

Something too much of this, in suppliant state
 My Saxon Princes, at thy levee wait.
 To partial love, with critic candor join'd,
 The calm tribunal of thine equal mind,
 Not to th' uncertain suffrage of the town,
 Do they refer their title to the crown.
 No pow'rs of fiction can my page display;
 No flights romantic lead the mind astray;

For truth historic has the canvas stretch'd,
 Laid on the priming, and the figures sketch'd ;
 The bound and limit of the muse's skill,
 To shade and heighten, and each outline fill.
 Oh might her handling, with successful art,
 Bid the bold forms come forth, and reach the heart !
 The conflict paint in Offa's stormy breast,
 While various passions for the sway contest ;
 And each, in turn, decided empire gains,
 And now the father, now the tyrant, reigns.
 What female virtue with Elfrida dwells,
 How Anglia's king in youthful grace excels,
 Ev'n thus, in dark monastic legends live ;
 A tale unvarnish'd to the stage I give,
 And only boast, to model what I found,
 Add scene, and dialogue, and measur'd sound.

Oh might th' attempt some abler bard incite,
 To call our ancient records to the light !—
 The darkest ages bright examples bear,
 And themes of power, to wake the virtuous tear ;
 Now to the public lost, as in the mine
 Unpolish'd gems, till genius bids them shine.
 Nor need we wonder, for the times refuse
 Her wonted honours, to the tragic muse.
 The springs of Hippocrene, that whilom roll'd
 Their fertilizing streams o'er sands of gold,

Now chill with blight and exhalation dank,
 Famine and scorn sit shiv'ring on the bank ;
 To mark their course, all luckless as they winde,
 The harvests wither, and the flocks are pin'd.

“ And knowing this,” exclaims thy friendly zeal,
 Ever awake, and anxious for my weal,
 “ Why dost thou loiter in th' unwholesome clime,
 “ Expos'd to all the maladies of rhyme ?
 “ The wasting atrophy thy purse may find,
 “ The palsey'd hopes, the fever of the mind,
 “ The giddy frenzy, that abroad will fly
 “ On paper wings, to dare the public eye ?—
 “ As follies of the day, youth might excuse
 “ Thy past excursions with the truant muse ;
 “ But the stay'd gravity of riper age,
 “ Disclaims the wildness of poetic rage.
 “ Art thou not in the solid bands enroll'd,
 “ Of sapient men, that barter words for gold ?
 “ Learn then to banish wit, but often joke,
 “ And fill thy head with Nokes, and Coke, and Croke.
 “ With thy profession let thy studies sort,
 “ Nor dream of style, beyond a Style's report.
 “ And thrive,—or if my counsel comes too late,
 “ And verse and scribbling are confirm'd thy fate ;
 “ Their close intrigues as decent wenchers veil,
 “ Thine idle dalliance with the muse conceal,

- " To silence, gloom, and mystery, confine,
 " Each stealthy madrigal, each graceless line ;
 " With studied gravity a credit claim,
 " For solemn science, and each graver aim.
 " One half of mankind by grimace are caught ;
 " And wealth and place by looks and shrugs are bought.
 " Such is the freight, when cunning dulness boasts
 " Her prosp'rous venture to the golden coasts ;
 " Such commerce we with stupid negros hold,
 " And barter flints and beads, for men and gold."

Thus friendship, plaintiff, would the muse decry.
 Now hear the muse, defendant, in reply.—

- " So circumscrib'd our happiness, 'tis right
 " To seize each harmless engine of delight.
 " The grove when woodbines, violets, paint the mead,
 " Shall we not smell them, as the path we tread ?
 " When clust'ring linnets in the hedge-row throng,
 " Shall we not stop, to listen to their song ?
 " The keenest trav'ller, in his urgent haste,
 " On some fair prospect will a moment waste,
 " And need I tell thee, that the muse hath pow'r
 " To glance a sunbeam on the darkling hour ?—
 " She, from the thorny bounds that hedge our way,
 " Sweet as the linnet, charms us with our lay.
 " When drear the path of life before us lies,
 " Her fairy visions in perspective rise.

" And happy they, whose leisure hours can find
 " The cheap unenvied luxuries of mind."

Believe me, friend, I scorn to waste my time,
 In scanning syllables, and tagging rhyme,
 When poetry no longer bears a price,
 The lust of rhyming were a barren vice.
 I know, the social tie resistless claims
 My time, my thoughts, my studies, and my aims.
 My graver moments, awful duties share,
 A father's fondness, and a husband's care.
 Poetic trisler, not a bard profess,
 Phœbus with me, is but a casual guest,
 No station'd resident, as when of old,
 Admetus' flocks he fed, and fill'd his fold ;
 His visits bring prosperity no more,
 They thin the fold, and dissipate the store.
 A foe to ceremony, I refuse
 All visits, from a coy fastidious muse ;
 She finds not entrance, if she comes not soon ;
 With free-will off'ring and unstudied boon.
 Nor classic furniture my shelves display,
 Nor guests my board, to bribe the muse's stay.
 In order rang'd, the sages of the law,
 My study fill, with magisterial awe ;
 In bulky corpulence they seize the eye ;
 And with the writers their productions vie ;

While many a serjeant, many a learned lord,
A lumbring pond'rous band, no place for wits afford.

Without ennui, I breakfast, sup, and dine,
With such companions as my stars assign;
Nor call with little Pope, my board to grace,
"Chiefs, out of war; and statesmen, out of place;"
For chiefs and statesmen boast no charms for me;
I herd with equals, for I will be free.—
Not, that I vaunt my dignity and ease,
For me the things, and not the titles please;
While Pope, in strains of flattery to himself,
Prates of his freedom, tho' the slave to self;
Of ease and dignity, whose soul was wrung
With jealousy, with groveling envy stung.—
Nor titled vanity, nor fops that rhyme,
Spouters, or critics cheat me of my time;
Nor base attendance at a great man's door,
Nor praises lavish'd on the splendid poor.
I court not authors, wtlings, and the throng,
So brilliant, ev'ry day and all day long;
Nor readings haunt, nor coterie of fools,
Where sage dictators vent theatric rules.—
Adult'rate converse, like adult'rate wine,
My stomach turns; I hate the rage to shine,
While vanity the rope with folly draws,
And fancied genius tumbles for applause,
My lazy mind, for peace and comfort runs,
To plain good nature's unassuming sons,

To bland affection smiling on the cheek,
 To kindly looks, that more than volumes speak,
 And artless spirits, that, with candor, dare
 To speak, and look, and be the things they are.
 I fly to mirth, from affectation free,
 From snip-snap pert, and sickening repartee.
 In converse, not of wit but kindness full,
 Without a blush, I venture to be dull;
 Nor seek to dazzle, with a vain parade
 Of wit, nor make society a trade;
 And when my desk receives th' imperfect strains,
 Safe, under lock and key, the bard remains.
 The muse but fills a corner in my breast,
 With public duty, private care possest.
 The relaxation, not the employ of life,
 A willing mistress, not a wedded wife.
 Few could suppose, how small a part of time
 Produc'd my trifles, that appear in rhyme.
 My rapid pen along the paper flies,
 Yet swifter than I write the measures rise.

Oh poor and worthless, in my sight, indeed,
 "The life to come, in every poet's creed."
 Nor yet more precious, have I learn'd to hold,
 The pride of place, or impotence of gold.
 I court not these; but aim, with steady plan,
 To prove the virtuous citizen and man.

A nobler wreath, domestic virtues yield;
 Than all the trophies of the sanguine field,
 Than all the fame a statesman's wiles afford,
 And barren palms of many a splendid word.
 The things I write may flourish or decay,
 Fortune may give, and fortune take away;
 This object adequate, without control,
 Supremely fills, and actuates my soul.
 This, only this, may stand, with fearless eye,
 Pond'ring the depths of dark futurity.
 The tender ties, that civil duties bind;
 Or nature's hand, hath planted in the mind;
 Sweet in themselves, without disguise or art,
 Speak home, and inward, to the heart of heart;
 The social habitudes to friendship rise,
 On use engrafting mutual charities,
 The silken ties, that soul with soul entwine,
 And never rudely strain, yet closely join.
 Thus, hours on hours, and days on days, I spend,
 That fools might ridicule, the good commend,
 And pride herself might envy, could she know
 Th' expansive sweetness, and the heartfelt glow,
 That ev'ry feeling, word, and act, attend,
 Which speaks the parent, or approves the friend.
 My children, in their dawn of being fair,
 Awake, endear solicitude and care.
 My roof re-echoes with their gladsome noise,
 Their charming follies, and their infant joys.

As tremulous their nascent pow'rs they try,
The tear of pleasure fills a father's eye.
Entranc'd I gaze, and feel my pride dilate,
With fancy'd pomp of patriarchal state;
And while I guide their tottering steps along,
Explain the language of the unpractis'd tongue,
Remove their wants, their little woes dispel,
And teach contentment in their eyes to dwell;
Such floods of joy my soften'd soul subdue,
As gold could never buy, nor riot knew.
From painful effort, and corroding strife,
Secure, I tread the downhill path of life;
Existing for myself, and for my own,
I wish to pass, untroubled and unknown.

A N S W E R

TO THE FOREGOING

E P I S T L E.

TOO partial friend, thy fond misjudging lays,
To me unwonted waft the voice of praise.
Self-love revolves the tablets of my mind,
Some just foundation for applause to find;
In vain revolves, the judgment must reprove
The pious falsehoods of thy blinded love.
Yet, in that volume, one fair page I trace;
Nor time shall cancel it, nor chance deface;
In golden cyphers, grav'd by virtue's hands,
Th' eternal name of holy friendship stands.
Imprudent flatterer, wherefore waste thy rhymes,
On proud obscurity in selfish times?

The barter'd praises of the vulgar train,
 Demand an interchange of praise or gain ;
 But neither, may the flatt'rer hope from me ;
 My power so bounded, and my tongue so free.

Some base-born project, some insidious plan,
 Stains the smooth intercourse of modern man ;
 Their smiles a sneer, their praises are a gibe ;
 My soul recoiling loaths the little tribe,
 Their harlot blandishments, that teem with guile,
 The palm expansive, and the marshall'd smile.
 When rising blasts of lucky baseness bear,
 The child of fortune to some lofty sphere,
 With humble gestures, and adoring eyes,
 They trace his dingy progress to the skies ;
 Of his snug mantle, hold the miry tail,
 " Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale."
 Inflated tow'ring, like an air balloon,
 Th' aspiring bauble rises on the noon ;
 The rustic, as he gazes, little knows
 What poor materials the vast bulk compose ;
 That sticks and taffeta, how cheap and slight,
 At distance seem so solid and so bright ;
 While, pois'nous acid force corrosive joins
 With dross, and refuse of the basest mines,
 How noxious vapour swells its gilded pride ;
 And how 'tis varnish'd o'er, its emptiness to hide.

With surface polish'd by unwearied art,
 The hard cold substance of the stony heart
 Scorns the soft trace of sympathy to bear,
 'Tis steely interest makes impression there ;
 No feeling sparks confess the genial pow'r
 Of gay collisions in the social hour ;
 A stubborn mass, unconquer'd, and the same
 In sorrow's menstruum, and in friendship's flame.
 The mind elated fix'd my fortunes low ;
 I cannot practise, for I do not know,
 The bold pretensions, that a credit raise,
 The trade of thriving, and the craft of praise.
 My lot is humble, for the fates denied
 The pow'r of rising, when they gave me pride.
 My lot is humble, for with pride they join'd,
 More dangerous inmate still, a feeling mind.

Enough, my muse, thy selfish prologue end ;
 My thoughts and rhymes be sacred to my friend ;
 Such monitory strains demand his ear,
 As love may bring, and love will patient hear.
 Yes, friend lov'd, I must the weakness chide,
 That bids thee from thy genius wander wide ;
 That holds thee down, a stranger to thyself,
 'Midst humble throngs that basely bow to self.
 Why should thy spirit bend to fashion's sway,
 Or sordid maxims of the present day ?

Why dwell complacent on the wasted hours,
 The toils, that mock thy bials and thy pow'rs ?
 Did nature warm thee with poetic fire,
 To grope with fools, for farthings in the mire ?
 For this, the bashful pride did nature give ?
 For this, the feelings tremblingly alive ?
 Improvident and hopeless, all thine aim,
 To join the poet's and the lawyer's name.
 Decided studies chuse ; no more remain
 Of fame enamour'd, yet the slave of gain ;
 'Twixt god and mammon, a divided thrall ;
 Be all a poet, or a lawyer all.
 With caution chuse, and stedfastly pursue,
 Some settled aim, nor lose it from thy view ;
 For indecision, mark of feeble mind,
 Blasts the best purposes of humankind.
 Emancipate thy soul from thirst of pelf,
 And dare to think and study for thyself.
 The muse's charms shall more delight afford,
 Than all the palms of many a splendid word.
 The ways of men, instructive book, peruse,
 And hoard materials for the moral muse.
 No more let studies the proud mind entame,
 Where wealth is dignity, and luck is fame.

Thy youth was mounted on ambition's car,
 And whirl'd unthinking to the stormy bar ;

Where practice weaves, perplex'd, her thorny maze,
 And captious science snares and springes lays,
 While truth and reason must forego their pride,
 And follow precedent, a purblind guide.
 Ah diff'rent far to youthful fancy's eye,
 Th' ennobling studies in perspective lie !
 Whatever great in human action dwells,
 Whatever noble in research excels ;
 The metes and bounds, by moral truth defin'd ;
 Unerring transcript of th' eternal mind.
 Primeval there, in pure effulgent light,
 Dwell the fair archetypes of good and right ;
 And those, that model states, and publish laws,
 Transfuse a beam from that eternal cause.
 Sublime pursuit, the mind of god to trace,
 Thro' its clear workings in the human race.
 An awful function, to protect the source
 Of human rights, and pour their steady course,
 Alike the palace and the cot to lave,
 And overwhelm th' oppressor, with resistless wave ;
 To guard the life of man from anxious fears,
 And, more than life, dispense what life endears ;
 To quell proud wrong, to hush the widow's cries ;
 And fill with joy the orphan's little eyes.

In speculation, such the lawyer's task,
 But, practice soon removes th' illusive mask.

Then, keen dexterity must come in aid,
 And what she finds a science, make a trade.
 Th' imposing gravity, the bold pretence,
 The pantomime, that holds the place of sense,
 Her progress smooth; and sometimes, too, the treat
 While lawyers fatten, as their clients eat.
 The brightest genius, in the legal field,
 The palm of merit and of praise shall yield,
 To the slow pack-horse, and th' enduring ass,
 With nerves of cable, and with front of brass.
 Or fiercer they, whose roaring charms the crowd,
 In error bold, and impudently loud,
 With low'ring brows, and well dissembled wrath,
 To fame and riches find a ready path;
 Imbibe each passion, that the clients feel,
 And heart and hand alike for outrage steel;
 Despise the bloodless palm, the wordy strife,
 And stake, for paltry fees, a worthless life.

Yet many a noble mind the bar displays,
 Where genius, taste, and science blend their rays;
 Full many a mind, that, cast in roman times,
 Had fill'd th' historian's page, the poet's rhymes;
 See wisdom, wit, and eloquence combin'd,
 And lib'ral worth with manly firmness join'd;
 Untainted they, in Themis' crowded schools,
 Amidst the buzzing swarm of knaves and fools;

'Midst vile prostrations of the sordid train,
 That deify the golden calf of gain;
 Some of the train I love, and some revere;
 My soul has hoarded many a friendship there.

Awake, my friend, th' aonian virgins hear;
 Hark, hark, they call thee to their tuneful sphere;
 There, let th' oppress'd and fainting soul respire,
 And draughts imbibe of pure ethereal fire.
 The smog of this dim spot, th' unhallow'd toil
 Th' imbruted spirit cloud with earthly soil;
 But soon the muses, in their purest springs,
 Shall purge thy thoughts from base sublunar things.
 Terrestrial fetters burst, thy plumes display,
 And soar to regions of eternal day.

Write for thyself, and for the rising age;
 Despise the plaudits of the modern stage:
 For gothic managers the muses chace,
 Grimace, and farce, and pageant, fill their place.
 No more, the muses to the drama bear
 Reforming laughter, and the virtuous tear;
 No more, the follies of the day control,
 The passions purge, and purify the soul.
 All serious feelings have become a pain,
 And laughter, with her light fantastic train,
 Transfers their place to topics of an hour,
 That spring and fade round dissipation's bow'r,

The mushroom jokes, a capital affords,
 The vapid humour of colloquial words,
 The transitory cant of vulgar life,
 And mirth with reason evermore at strife.
 Hard to descry, and harder still to hit,
 The thin fugacious forms of local wit.

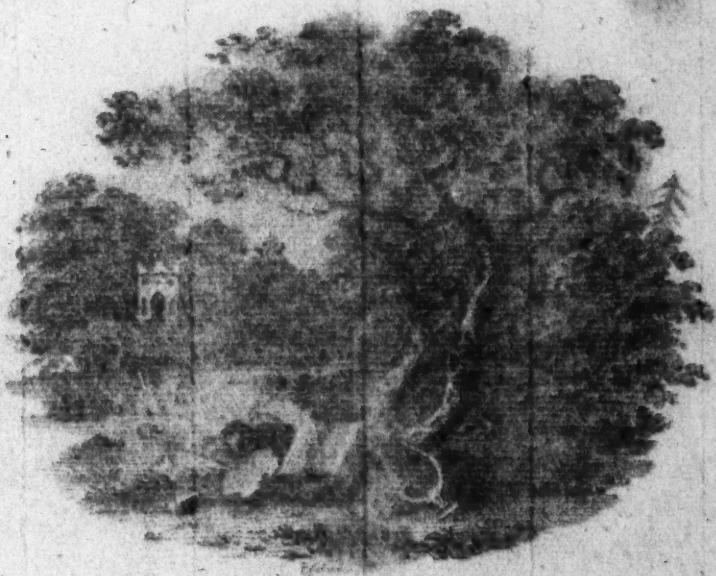
Despise th' example of the worthless throng,
 That tune, for paltry gain, an abject song;
 This hour, the panders of degraded taste,
 The next, in slavery fold, to snuff and paste.
 Woo not the muses, as a means to thrive;
 Thou dost not live to write, or write to live.
 From light frivolity, and vain expence,
 Retir'd, in plain and frugal competence,
 Thou dost not ape thy wealthy neighbour's state,
 Thy temp'rate wish is bounded by thy fate.
 To virtue's cause devote the moral strain;
 Give wholesome lessons, to the young and vain;
 Warn the light foot with cautious pace to tread,
 Where flow'rs and verdure deck the smiling mead;
 The wide-spread snares, the lurking adders show,
 The pit-falls fathomless, that yawn below;
 What fell volcanos mine the treacherous ground,
 Where roses bloom, and clust'ring grapes abound.

The brightest eyes for thee shall drop a tear,
 The fairest hands strew cypresses on thy bier,

In other times ; but from the present days,
 Thou mayst not hope for profit or for praise.
 Did all thy numbers breathe an Homer's flame,
 The living poet may despair of fame.
 Ev'n in th' augustan age, and happier climes,
 Scorn and proscription would pursue thy rhymes.
 But here—what hands bestow the verdant meed ?
 How few the judges, 'mongst the few that read ?
 Our spirits are provincial, like our land,
 And all our notions are at second-hand.
 To clothe our minds and bodies we import
 The worn-out fashions of a foreign court.
 The public judgment scarcely walks alone,
 Knows not its strength, nor dares to use its own.

As when, to those, who long in darkness mourn'd,
 The leech's skilful hand has light return'd ;
 Surrounding objects teem with wild affright,
 Promiscuous burbling on the timid sight ;
 The dazzled eyes bewilder'd range in space,
 Nor measure distance, nor distinguish place.
 The limbs unfinew'd, from their tasks retire,
 Distrust themselves, and still a guide require.
 Ierne long, in slavish gloom, oppress'd,
 Relax'd, and palsy'd, with unhappy rest,
 In pow'r of others, never of her own.
 Her place forgotten, and her strength unknown,

In blindness led, in ignorance confin'd,
Was, like the Danite, doom'd in chains to grind;
Restor'd, at length, to freedom's dazzling noon,
She scarcely can enjoy the precious boon,
Awakes her dormant pow'rs, with ling'ring fear,
And dark with light, surrounding things appear.



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